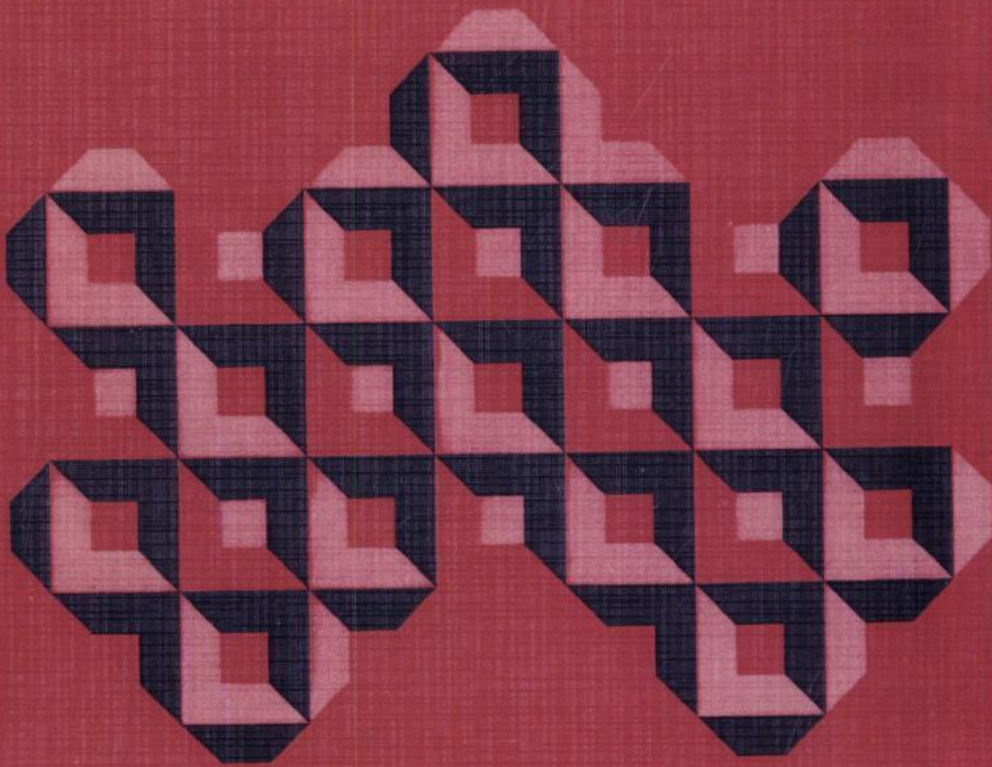
Gary W. Burnett

Paul & the Salvation of the Individual



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VOLUME 57

PAUL AND THE SALVATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL

BY

GARY W. BURNETT

BRILL
LEIDEN · BOSTON · KÖLN
2001

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Burnett, Gary W.
Paul and the salvation of the individual / by Gary W. Burnett.
p. cm. — (Biblical interpretation series, ISSN 0928-0731 ; v. 57)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 9004122974
1. Bible. N.T. Romans I-VIII—Social scientific criticism.2. Salvation—Biblical teaching. 3. Persons—Biblical teaching. I. Title. II. Series.

BS2665.6.S25 87 2001
233—dc21 2001035217

Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

Burnett, Gary W. :
Paul and the salvation of the individual / by Gary W. Burnett. – Leiden ; Boston ; Köln : Brill, 2001
(Biblical interpretation series ; Vol. 57)
ISBN 90-04-12297-4

deo
PUBLISHING

ISSN 0928-0731
ISBN 90 04 12297 4

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PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This present work is a revision of my 1999 Queens University of Belfast doctoral thesis. My thanks, first of all then, go to the examining readers of the thesis, Professor Graham Stanton and Dr Hamilton Moore for their close and careful attention to it. And, of course, special thanks are due to Professor Cecil McCullough, my supervisor, for all his patient help, direction and encouragement throughout the period of research. The supervisor-student relationship has become one of good friendship.

I am grateful also to Dr John Barclay whose input and helpful suggestions at the beginning of this study helped put me on the track I eventually followed, and whose encouragement from time to time was valued. Thanks also are due to other colleagues from the British New Testament Society, especially Professor Michael Goulder, Dr Bruce Longenecker and Dr Tom Wright, who took the time to provide useful insights and criticisms after I presented a paper outlining some of my ideas at the annual conference in 1998.

I would also like to thank Dr David Orton for reading and commenting on the manuscript of this book and for his helpful suggestions for improvements. Despite all the input, help and suggestions I have received from the learned scholars I have mentioned, the final result and any inaccuracies it contains are my responsibility alone!

Finally, my special thanks go to my family and friends. To my mother, for her unfailing love and constant prayers. To the friends who have met for many years in our home fellowship group—especially Dr David Ross, for the interest and enthusiasm he has shown for this project.

But above all, I am unspeakably grateful to my wife, Christine, and our two wonderful daughters, Gemma and Sarah, for their patience, love and encouragement throughout my studies these past years.

Belfast, Northern Ireland, May 2001

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Increasing Emphasis on the Group in New Testament Studies

In New Testament studies over the past twenty-five years there has been an increasing emphasis on the understanding of the documents against a background of people groups—Jews and Gentiles—and how the New Testament writers understood the relationship of these groups within what they saw as the emerging plan of God. The result of this has been that more and more emphasis has been given to the relevance of the texts to questions of collective identity and social cohesion, and less and less importance attached to how the texts might address issues more to do with the individual, the salvation of the individual and individual behaviour. This has developed largely as a result of two influences: that of the tools and methods of the social science disciplines, to which New Testament scholars have increasingly turned for assistance in their quest to understand the texts; and that of the New Perspective on Paul, which has served to highlight Paul's concern about the relationship between Jew and Gentile in the community of the people of God and along with this the wide acceptance of a covenantal framework for understanding first century Judaism and the worldview of the New Testament writers.

Since Sanders' groundbreaking work which ushered in the New Perspective on Paul, the idea of covenant as central to Judaism in Second Temple Judaism has become widely accepted. Although sometimes questioned because of the relative infrequency of the term covenant in many of the texts from the period, Sanders showed quite convincingly that covenantal ideas were embedded in Jewish thinking at this time.[1] In the debate that followed Sanders' work, the underlying assumption amongst scholars has been that the Christian movement was essentially shaped by the conflict between Jewish

[1] E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1977).

Christianity and Gentile Christianity,[2] and that the New Testament, particularly the writings of Paul, reflects this conflict. From this perspective, as Dunn puts it, "Paul was not arguing against . . . Judaism as such but against other Christian (Jewish) missionaries. The underlying issue is . . . how the gospel relates to Israel's heritage in terms of continuity and discontinuity".[3] It has become firmly the consensus that Paul understood what God was doing in Christ largely against the covenantal framework of thought which he shared with the other different movements within second-temple Judaism. Often this has been expressed by reference to theological narrative, the idea of a sacred story which began with God's dealings with Israel and continued through the story of Christ and subsequently that of his followers.[4] This story, suggests Hays, "provides the foundational substructure on which Paul's argumentation is constructed".[5] In such an understanding of Paul's worldview and theology, what emerges as important is the story of the people of God, with a focus on God's plans for and promises to Israel which are fulfilled and come to a climax in the person of the Messiah and his followers.[6] Paul's primary concern, then, in most of his letters is how God's purposes are working out in his world and how both Jews and Gentiles can participate in those purposes. He works from a clear covenantal perspective[7] whereby the Jewish God is still committed to his people; yet the means of being identified with this people have changed for Paul from issues of ethnic significance to the issue of allegiance to (faith in) Christ.

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[2] This scheme, of course, was originally proposed by F.C. Baur, *History of the Church in the First Three Centuries*, transl. A. Menzies, 3rd edn (London, Williams & Norgate, 1878–9).

[3] J.D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1998), 340.

[4] B. Witherington, *Paul's Narrative Thought World* (Louisville, Westminster/John Knox, 1994) envisages four phases of the story—1) that of a world gone wrong, 2) that of Israel, 3) that of Christ and 4) that of the Christians.

[5] R.B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3.1–4.11* (Chico, Scholars, 1983), 5, 6.

[6] This is the central thesis of N.T. Wright in both *The New Testament and the People of God* (London, SPCK, 1992) and *The Climax of the Covenant* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1991).

[7] See W.S. Campbell, "Covenant and New Covenant" in *The Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IVP, 1993), 179–83 for a review of the use of covenant language in Paul. Campbell is amongst those who suggest that Paul's theology was covenantal, despite the lack of explicit covenantal terminology.

In the New Perspective, then, and with a thorough-going covenantal framework within which to understand the way in which the New Testament writers are interpreting God's unfolding purposes, what emerges as of vital importance is the question of the identity of the people of God and how this group is to be defined. Given the struggle that continued throughout the period of Paul's lifetime, this is the major issue with which he was concerned—as Longenecker puts it, "matters of covenant self-definition . . . frequently emerge in Paul's letters".[8] Once this is established, then, Paul tends to be interpreted almost exclusively in terms of what he is saying about the relationship between the two groups of Jews and Gentiles, the issue of God's unfolding purposes for his people, and how that people is to be defined. Reading Paul against the background of the covenant and seeing his theology as reflecting the Jewish covenantal tradition has become well accepted,[9] in the process tending to highlight more corporate concerns in Paul.

This way of interpreting Paul undoubtedly does justice to the historical reality of the circumstances of the early churches and the probable mindset and worldview of the apostle, and certainly serves to correct the highly individualised reading of Paul prior to the New Perspective. In addition, it has served to put the spotlight fully on questions to do with the collective, rather than the individual.[10]

The other major factor that has influenced our view of how much the New Testament is concerned with the individual has been the use of the social sciences in New Testament studies. Nearly twenty years ago, Malherbe traced and evaluated the growing use of the sociological method in biblical studies and noted that this began to emerge because "parochialism in dealing with Christian origins has become intolerable".[11] He suggests that, whereas nineteenth century

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[8] B.W. Longenecker, "Contours of Covenant Theology in the Post-Conversion Paul", in R.N. Longenecker (ed.), *The Road from Damascus: The Impact of Paul's Conversion on his Life, Thought and Ministry* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1997), 125–46 (145).

[9] The work of N.T. Wright—e.g. *The Climax of the Covenant*, and *The New Testament and the People of God*, reflects strongly this approach to understanding Paul, as do most of the recent commentaries on Romans—e.g. J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (Dallas, Word, 1988); J.A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (New York, Doubleday, 1992).

[10] E.g. W.S. Campbell, *Paul's Gospel in an Intercultural Context: Jew and Gentile in the Letter to the Romans* (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1991), 35, suggests that the fundamental Pauline themes in Romans are "corporate rather than individualistic".

[11] A.J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity*, 2nd edn (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1983), 1ff.

scholars typically had benefited from a classical education which enabled them to seek to understand Christianity as part of its cultural and social environments, the orientation of New Testament scholars throughout the twentieth century up until the late 1960s was much more theological and literary. A dissatisfaction with the results of these sort of concerns,[12] then, led to an exploration of the use of the social science disciplines in the study of the New Testament and Christian origins. The disciplines of sociology, social psychology and social anthropology by this stage had come of age, with a century of research behind them and over the past thirty years New Testament scholars have sought to bring them within the scope of the historical method of biblical criticism.[13]

What we have seen, then, over this period, is an attempt to bridge the cultural gap between our own world and the world of the first century Mediterranean societies, a gap which acts as a barrier to the proper understanding of the biblical texts in their original context. By seeking to understand the way in which culture and society functioned in these regions at that time,[14] New Testament scholars have hoped to understand better the meaning of the texts in their original context. The sort of work that has been done in this regard has been considerable and of a great variety. It includes, at a fundamental level, an attempt to realise a social description of the New Testament period and environment, taking into account socio-economic, geographical and socio-historical data;[15] beyond this we have seen the use of a variety of sociological models in an attempt to shed light on the New Testament materials[16]—for example, models

[12] J.G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1975), 4, refers to this as "an overemphasis on a literary-historical and theological point of view to the detriment of the sociological".

[13] P.F. Esler, *Galatians* (London & New York, Routledge, 1998), 2.

[14] See J.H. Elliott, *Social Scientific Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (London, SPCK, 1993) for an excellent survey of the various uses of the social sciences in New Testament study.

[15] Perhaps the best known example of this is W. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, Yale, 1983); see also J. Stambaugh & D. Balch *The Social World of the First Christians* (London, SPCK, 1986) and E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1987).

[16] See H.C. Clark, *Knowing the Truth: A Sociological Approach to New Testament Interpretation* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1989). Clark categorises the various approaches that have been taken as seeking to analyse early Christianity by use of 1) Social Description, 2) Social Dynamics and Social Roles, 3) Anthropological Analysis and Group Identity, 4) Sociology of Knowledge, 5) Linguistics, Epistemology and Hermeneutics, and 6) Structuralism and Deconstructionism.

of leadership and authority to us help understand figures such as Jesus and Paul or theories of conflict to shed light on disputes within the early church.[17] In addition, there has been an appeal to the area of the sociology of knowledge to help us understand the symbolic universes of the New Testament writers and their readers[18] and the use of cultural anthropology to discuss the value systems of the world of the New Testament and hence the motivational factors behind the behaviour of both the authors and players in the New Testament drama.[19]

This considerable body of work has undoubtedly brought its benefits in focusing attention on the specific social and historical context in which the texts were written and read and in suggesting novel ways of interpreting them. What it has certainly done is to draw attention to the role of culture as a determining factor in the lives of the first Christians and the importance of social factors in the development of the Christian movement. Recognising the importance of all of this leads to the view, expressed by Meeks, that religion is "a subset within the multiple systems that make up the culture and subcultures of a particular society" and that "the sort of questions to

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[17] Following Max Weber's description of the "charismatic leader" popularly understood to have been sent by God at a time of extreme emergency—M. Weber, *From Max Weber*, transl. & ed. H.H. Gerth & C.W. Mills (New York, Cambridge, 1977), 245, 247–48, 269—both Hengel and Theissen have portrayed Jesus as such a charismatic leader: M. Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and his Followers*, transl. J.C.G. Grieg (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1981); G. Theissen, *The First Followers of Jesus: A Sociological Analysis of the Earliest Christianity*, transl. J. Bowen (London, SCM, 1978). G. Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, transl. J.H. Schutz (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1982) is an example of a sociological analysis of the conflicts in the Corinthian congregation.

[18] Work here builds on the work of A. Schutz, *On Phenomenology and Social Relations: Selected Writings*, ed. H. Wagner (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1970); A. Schutz and T. Luckmann, *The Structures of the Life-World*, transl. R.M. Zaner & H.T. Englehardt (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1973) and on that of Luckmann and Berger: P. Berger & T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, Doubleday, 1967); P. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, Doubleday, 1969). Aspects of this approach have been taken up by, for example, P.F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theory* (Cambridge, CUP, 1988); W. Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians* (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1986); N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 122–126.

[19] Prominent in seeking to understand the cultural differences between the world of the New Testament and our modern world has been B. Malina, who uses the anthropological categories of "shame" and "guilt" cultures to characterise the social behaviour of the first Christians and thus to interpret the NT texts. See chapter 3 for a discussion of shame cultures and Malina's work.

be asked about the early Christian movement are those about how it worked".[20] And in particular the important thing is how it worked at the level of the group.

Both these factors, then—a covenantal reading of the New Testament and the influence of the social sciences—have focused attention on the grander scheme of God's purposes and their outworking with respect to people groups and on both the social meaning of the texts and their social function. Issues of a more abstract, theological sort to do with the nature of human beings and the potential for an individual to participate within God's purposes have tended to become less important in this current way of viewing the New Testament.

We will return to both these matters in more detail—that of the new perspective in Pauline studies, the importance attributed to the covenant in Pauline theology, and the corresponding focus on the relevance of Paul's writings to the two groups of Gentiles and Jews, and that of the use of sociology and social anthropology in the study of the Pauline letters in due course.

At this point, however, we want is to raise some initial concerns about the use of the social sciences in New Testament studies and to proceed to explain the purpose of the present study and its importance.

The Use of the Social Sciences in New Testament Studies—Some Preliminary Concerns

It is undoubtedly the case that modern Western society puts an emphasis on the individual that is quite unique, historically and culturally speaking. Economic and technological advancement, along with the twentieth century discipline of psychology, all promote the importance of personal achievement and inner consciousness and experience, to a degree that is quite foreign to many other cultures and ages.[21] In addition, with regards to religion, it is likely that such an individualistic culture promotes the interior, psychological and personal to the detriment of more collective aspects of worship, community and group identity within the wider context of the world around. This being the nature of our present Western world, it might

[20] W. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 6, 7.

[21] See chapter 3, "Individualism in the First Century" for a discussion of the typical individualistic characteristic of modern society.

be argued, could predispose us to view the texts of other ages from an alien perspective.

The questions, therefore, of the nature of self formation and self consciousness and of the importance or otherwise of individualism in the period in question are of great importance, if we are to understand the relationship of the individual to the society of which she is a part, and the nature and role of religion in such a setting. How much could religion be said to be an individual, internal, psychological matter, and how much did it play a collective role and can be explained in terms of social function? This question, in relation to the Hellenistic urban centres of the Mediterranean world in the first century CE is of considerable importance as we attempt to frame a perspective in which to view the New Testament texts.

It has been suggested that the ideology of this period was actually thoroughly anti-individualistic and that any view to the contrary has been too much shaped by modern Western individualistic culture.[22] Martin asserts that modern generalisations about Hellenistic culture merely reflect the individualistic view of the self prevalent in the last one hundred and fifty years. He maintains that Hellenistic ethics were dominated by the social principle of "Socratic care", and that Hellenistic religion was a distinctively social phenomenon, and concludes that "the intellectual, religious and artistic expressions of this culture all confirm an anti-individualistic character for the alternative social strategies of identity produced during this period".[23] He quotes the observation of Arendt, that for the Greeks, "a life spent . . . in the privacy of 'one's own (ιδιον), . . . is 'idiotic' by definition".[24] Martin claims that the Hellenistic world had little or no interest in the individual and that identity was very much a social construction. Furthermore, he sees religion in this period as playing a collective, social role. Here, typically, the focus was on social inclusion based upon distinctive claims of spiritual kinship and salvation was viewed as deliverance from individual solitude and wandering.

Martin quotes Nietzsche's argument, that "every human being was a 'necessary consequence' of an almost unintelligibly complex web

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[22] L.H. Martin, "The Anti-Individualistic Ideology of Hellenistic Culture", *Numen*, 41, 1994, 117–140.

[23] L.H. Martin, 117.

[24] L.H. Martin, 124 quotes Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Garden City, New York, Anchor Books, 1959), 35.

of factors 'assembled from the elements and influence of things past and present'",[25] and is obviously influenced by arguments from the social sciences that suggest that the notion of an individual self emerged at some stage in human history from a more collective sense amongst people, and that it is impossible ever to conceive of an autonomous self aside from the forces of society and culture which impinge upon it. Based on these presuppositions, Martin concludes that the construction of self in the Hellenistic world is "interindividualistic" and that the shared cultural ideal has not only a collective but an anti-individualistic nature.[26]

Such suppositions have been common in anthropology during the twentieth century. Social anthropology has a long history of viewing the self consciousness of primitive peoples as being different from ours. The primitive world-view has often been characterised as one where different modes of existence are confused and the limitations of individual human beings are not known. The elemental forces of the world are thus closely linked to human beings and the physical environment is not clearly thought of in separate terms.[27] Durkheim's formative work indicated that individualistic practices are less important in primitive societies, since he claimed the individual is much less clearly defined as a separate entity than in more complex, differentiated societies.[28] This reflects a common sociological view in the earlier part of the last century that individual self consciousness in human society had an evolutionary nature, with self differentiation from the world and individual independence and autonomy only gradually emerging. Tuan, for example, arguing for the historical evolution of the self, claims that there is a peculiar concern of "Western culture" with the self which is not evident in "pre-modern" societies; here there is no discrimination between the self and the collectivity and the self is irreducible—it is only in modernity that it becomes divisible and separated into discrete components".[29]

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[25] L.H. Martin, 133 quotes F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York, MacMillan, 1923, 1966), 26.

[26] L.H. Martin, 134.

[27] M. Douglas, "Primitive Thought Worlds" in R. Robertson (ed.), *Sociology of Religion* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969), 79–99.

[28] E. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York, Free Press, 1965), 462.

[29] Y.F. Tuan, *Segmented World and Self: Group Life and Individual Consciousness* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 139–167. Tuan views western culture

Dumont notes that modern anthropology treats the individual as a peculiarly Western concern.[30] There is thus in the social science literature a tendency to view the individual as a self-conscious creative agent as a purely modern phenomenon which was not present in more primitive times or societies.[31]

Not only that, but there is also the view that presentations of the self are derived from the social context, with little consideration given to individual creativity or initiation. Anthropologist A.P. Cohen asserts that it is the tradition of his own discipline to insist that the self is a reflex of superordinate determining forces and is inconstant, adapting all the time to social interaction.[32] Ever since Durkheim presented his view of the person pressed into an organic matrix in which functional interdependency prevailed over individuality, the self has generally been presented as a replica in miniature of society. Anthropologists typically have viewed individuals as defined by their structural position in society and culture was seen as imposing meaning on individuals. Cohen contends that the social sciences, including social anthropology, have tended to take a very deterministic approach to the question of the self and society, with the self remaining a passive subject of society and culture.[33] "Historically, anthropology has privileged the collective . . . and neglected the individual and experiential".[34] Sociologists, too, tend to focus upon the self as a concept defined by others.[35] Indeed, the discipline might be said

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as encouraging "an exaggerated belief in the power and value of the individual" and suggests that the "self-conscious individual is a cultural artefact", 139.

[30] L. Dumont, *Essays on Individualism: Modern Ideology In Anthropological Perspective* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986), 215, 23, Dumont says that "The Individual . . . appears only in the ideology of modern societies" and "modern individualism, when seen against the background of the other great civilisations that the world has known, is an exceptional phenomenon".

[31] R.F. Baumeister, *Identity, Cultural Change and the Struggle for the Self* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1986). Baumeister, a sociologist, claims that in pre-modern times our current emphasis on individuality was absent, and follows Durkheim in the view that the individual did not exist in traditional cultures.

[32] A.P. Cohen, *An Alternative Anthropology of Identity* (London, Routledge, 1994), 27.

[33] A.P. Cohen, *An Alternative Anthropology of Identity*, 118ff.

[34] A.P. Cohen, *An Alternative Anthropology of Identity*, 132.

[35] G.H. Mead, "Self and Society", in A. Giddens (ed.), *Human Societies: An Introductory Reader in Sociology* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992), 356–358. Typical and formative in sociological thinking is Mead's view, "the individual experiences himself . . . [as a self] . . . not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same social group, or from the generalised standpoint of the social group as a whole to which he belongs. For he enters his own experience

to have a vested interest in pointing to the ways in which the individual is formed by groups and identifies with groups.[36] The question of an underlying, self-deterministic self, a 'naked' self, or the self as a "stance-taking entity"[37] is not one which is readily acceptable to sociology, given its inherent disciplinary bias.

As we have discussed, the past thirty years or so have seen increasing recourse by New Testament scholars to the social science disciplines in the quest to do justice to the New Testament texts as products of the first century Mediterranean world that produced them. Consideration of the historical social situation and "symbolic universe" of the writers and readers of the early church has become, and rightly so, indispensable to understanding the New Testament documents. It is vital, however, to understand the predispositions and potential weaknesses of the tools that have been used. In the case of the social sciences there is almost of necessity a need to elevate the social over the individual; this is a trend that can be seen through the literature of that discipline, and it is one which needs to be taken into account when New Testament scholars seek to borrow from it.

The Purpose of the Present Study

This study seeks, by examining a number of texts in Paul's letter to the Romans, to see how important is the relevance of the gospel to the individual in Paul's thinking. It seeks to see if Paul was concerned with the individual qua individual, irrespective of social or, indeed, historical identity; whether Paul's understanding of God's work in the world was primarily operative at the level of the individual, as opposed to being largely concerned with people groups and group identity.

If the person in the Hellenistic world of which Paul was a part, had, as a number of social scientists and New Testament scholars insist, a sense of the self that was completely or largely embedded

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as a self or individual, not directly or immediately . . . but only in so far as he first becomes an object to himself just as other individuals are objects to him or in his experience" (358).

[36] E. Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and other Inmates* (London, Penguin, 1968), 279. Goffman notes this bias within his own discipline and in this work asserts the individual's ability to be independent.

[37] E. Goffman, *Asylums*, 280.

in the family or kinship group of which he was a member and his behaviour was determined by his societal norms and expectations, then there are very serious implications for the way in which we read the Pauline texts. Our primary and fundamental focus must be on how what Paul has to say reflects such norms and expectations; we will primarily be focused on the social function of the behavioural aspects of Paul's teaching; we must reckon on Paul's theology primarily concerning the question of how people groups are related to God; salvation will be interpreted primarily in a social context; and we must beware of interpreting what he says as having a focus on the needs of the individual, particularly his inner, psychological needs or on individual soteriology.

Many recent scholarly considerations of the Pauline texts, and Romans in particular, do seem to reflect such underlying assumptions about the self in the New Testament period,[38] and a number of writers have questioned the extent that Paul had the soteriology of the individual in mind when writing Romans.[39] We will examine these in more detail in the Part II of this study when discussing the Roman texts. As we have highlighted, though, even where this is not the case, the emphasis that we have noted that there has been on the issue of the participation of Jews and Gentiles together in the people of God that has come to the fore in Pauline studies in this New Perspective era, does tend to focus attention on matters of corporate identity,[40] and sometimes in a way that has obscured the relevance of Paul's theology to the individual. All this, then, has created

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[38] B. Witherington III, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove, IVP, 1998), esp. 18–51, bases his construction of the "ancient personality" of the apostle on ideas drawn from the social sciences, which portray people from this era as entirely "collectivist" and not "individualistic" selves. In this portrayal, Paul's social network in the context of his gender, generation and geography defined his identity wholly and the social conventions of a proposed "honour code" determined his behaviour. According to Witherington (299) "It can even be asserted that Paul was not an "individual" in the modern sense at all". All this, according to the author, must inform our reading of Paul.

[39] Typical of the approach of many writers is that of W.S. Campbell (see note 10) or N. Elliott, *The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul's Dialogue with Judaism* (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1990), 292, who complains of an "individualist-existentialist skew" in the interpretation of Romans from the Reformation until recently.

[40] See chapter six for a discussion of the way in which recent scholarship has tended to concentrate on more collective matters of group identity and social interaction in its approach to Romans.

a general tendency for thinking about the way in which Paul may have had the individual in mind, or about the relevance to the individual of Paul's theology to be somewhat neglected, and in some cases, almost unacceptable.

If, however, we were to suppose that Paul and his contemporaries had a robust sense of themselves as individuals, were quite capable of being critical of the society and culture in which they lived, experienced personal emotions in much the same way that we moderns do, and were at times capable of self-interested behaviour that did not depend on the norms and expectations of the group of which they were a part, then we might be right in thinking that we might find in Paul a concern with how the gospel met the personal, intellectual, religious and emotional needs of the individual. And, in particular, when we turn to his letter to the Romans, where we have as explicit an exposition of his understanding of the gospel as anywhere, we might expect to find an explanation of how the individual person fits into the grand scheme of God's purposes and a concern for his or her salvation. If the individual self of the Hellenistic world in which Paul lived was, in fact, not dissimilar to the sense of self that we might recognise today, then, it is likely that Paul had a keen sense of the importance of the individual in his gospel, and that we might find evidence of this in Romans.[41]

Methodology & Approach

The first task, then, is to examine the nature of the self in the Hellenistic world in which the apostle Paul lived and ministered; to evaluate the importance of the individual in this world and to detect the existence in it of self-conscious and self-motivated behaviour; and to see if the religious experience of the time can in any way be said to serve an individual's need for personal salvation rather than simply a social function. If the indication from this is that the world of the New Testament had a robust sense of the importance of the

[41] The comment of D. Moo, *Romans 1–8* (Chicago, Moody, 1991), 28 is salient here: "to make the relationship between the two peoples—Jews and Gentiles—the theme of Romans, with the transformation of the individual a subordinate, supporting concept, is to reverse their relationship in the letter, to confuse background with foreground. The scholars who have put people questions at the center of Romans have overreacted to the neglect of these matters among earlier interpreters".

individual, then it suggests strongly to us that we might find evidence of this in Paul too.

Part I proceeds, then, first of all to consider some modern approaches to sociology and social anthropology which help us to understand the nature of both the self and culture, and to conclude how much individual behaviour might be said to be determined by society and the surrounding culture. This is of importance as we consider the relationship between an individual and the society in which he or she lives, and in particular that between the first century individual and the group of which he or she was a member. It is important, too, given the way in which these disciplines have recently been used by New Testament scholars.

With these general points in mind, then, we will move on more specifically to consider the nature of the self in the Hellenistic world of the New Testament and to consider the sense of individuality and individualism that existed in this world. This will be done by, firstly, a brief review of the classical world that was the predecessor of the period in which we are interested, by means of understanding how the question of individualism in this period is typically treated in classical scholarship; next, a consideration of how well we might characterise the ancient Mediterranean world as a "shame culture" will be given (the concept of a shame culture is a characteristic given by social anthropologists to certain societies, which typically sets them quite apart from modern "guilt" cultures, and are viewed as strongly collectivist); and finally, building upon all this, some consideration will be given to the socio-historic situation of the urban Hellenistic centres of the first century CE in order to come to a conclusion as to the importance of the individual within this society. The focus throughout Part I will be on building an overall picture of the importance of the individual self in the first century Mediterranean world by examining relevant sociological and literary-historical research. This will enable us to see how reasonable it might be to suggest that a sense of the importance of the individual self existed in this world, and that, therefore, we might suggest Paul to have had a lively interest in the individual and the relevance of the gospel to him. The primary emphasis in this thesis will be given to the Pauline texts selected in Part II, examining them for evidence of this interest; Part I paves the way for this, by showing how feasible it is to challenge some of the prevailing approaches to Pauline studies which assume a sociological model for the self which of necessity directs

attention to the collective in Paul's thinking. Considerable attention, therefore, in Part I will be given to discussing how the disciplines of sociology and social anthropology approach the individual and the collective and coming to some conclusions as to the relevance of this to studying Paul. Of necessity, the relevance of our discussion of the self, culture and the collective will be applied to what we know of the world of the Mediterranean cities of the first century, in order to pose the important question as to whether a man of this world, Paul, could reasonably be supposed to have been interested in the application of his gospel to the individual.

One important element contributing to our sense of whether we might reasonably expect this sense of the individual in Paul, is the religious backdrop to the world in which he lived. We will move on, then, in the second half of Part I from a general picture of the way in which the individual was viewed during this period to seek an appreciation of how important the individual was in the religions of the time, including Judaism. An understanding of the extent to which these religions served an entirely social function and thus can only be discussed with respect to matters of group identity, cohesion and interrelations with other groups, will be of assistance in determining the likely level of importance of the individual within Pauline Christianity. If we were, for example, to detect a concern in the wider world with self-enlightenment and personal salvation, particularly if such concerns could be detected within Judaism, then it would not surprise us to find similar concerns in Paul.

Our aim throughout Part I, it must be stressed, is to come to a conclusion as to the reasonableness of suggesting that Paul may have had a strong interest in the individual, on the basis of what we know of the world in which Paul lived, and through a consideration of pointers from the disciplines of sociology and anthropology. Although we will examine Hellenistic and Jewish sources outside the New Testament for support for the existence of individualism (including religious individualism), the space constraints of this present study will not permit an exhaustive analysis. Enough will be done, however, to give us confidence to examine the New Testament texts for evidence that the individual was important. It is on the New Testament texts themselves, then, that the main emphasis will lie.

Having considered the sense of self and the level of individualistic behaviour in the Hellenistic world, we will proceed in Part II of the study to examine a number of texts in Paul's letter to the Romans

to see if we might detect an interest in the relevance of the gospel to the individual in Paul's thinking. In Romans we have our most explicit statement of Paul's understanding of the gospel.[42] Recent work on Romans has questioned whether it is in fact "Paul's last will and testament", or a comprehensive and systematic outline of Paul's theology,[43] but without doubt we have in Romans a quite full explanation of the gospel, albeit couched in ways that meet the specific needs of the Roman church and Paul's own personal reasons for writing to Rome.[44] If we are to come to a conclusion regarding the importance of the individual in Paul's thinking, then Romans would seem to be well worth investigating. If Paul and his readers were collectivist persons, their thinking and behaviour embedded in their kinship groups, and if Paul's gospel is mostly to do with larger cosmic themes about the outworking of the purposes of God and how various people groups fit into them, then it is likely that in Romans we will only find Paul concerned with questions concerning the identity of the people of God and how this affects the tensions between the groups in Rome of Jewish and Gentile Christians.

If, on the other hand, Paul had a lively sense of his own and his readers' individuality, he is presenting his gospel in a world where the quest for personal salvation is not uncommon, and there is a history within Paul's own Jewish tradition of individuals having a personal sense of their relationship with God, then it is surely the case that we will find in Paul's presentation of his gospel in Romans indications that the salvation of the individual is of substantial importance for Paul and that there is much of relevance to the individual in what he has to say. While Romans may not be the systematic exposition of individual soteriology that previous exegetes might have supposed, and even if Paul is seeking to address a particular social situation within the church, we still have here an explanation of how

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[42] Recent discussions of Romans have emphasised the specific social factors in the Roman church and Paul's own personal circumstances and plans as the important factors in the way in which Paul wrote Romans, but most commentators admit that, for whatever reason, we have in Romans as full a presentation of Paul's gospel as there is. E.g. J.D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1997), 25 sees Romans as the Pauline letter least concerned with situation-specific concerns and the key pointer to Paul's mature understanding of the gospel. For a fuller discussion of this, see Chapter 6.

[43] See note 8 in Chapter 6.

[44] See section entitled "The Stress on the Collective in Romans" in Chapter 6 for a discussion of the reasons for Romans.

the gospel is the "power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom 1:16), and, if Paul is deeply interested in the relevance of the gospel to the individual, then we will surely discover this in Romans.

Three passages have been selected for discussion. The first, Romans 1:16–17, is of value in our study, in that it can be said to be a summary of the gospel which Paul intends to outline to his readers in Rome. In many ways these two verses seem to sum up the line of argument and the main themes which Paul follows up to chapter eight in Romans.[45] Paul's intention is to present his understanding of the gospel to this church which he has never visited (perhaps, in a sense, to present his credentials),[46] but with which he very much wants to establish both contact and a working relationship (1:10–13; 15:23–33), and, after his opening words of introduction, he begins his argument. Verses 16 and 17 of chapter 1 present us with a concise statement of Paul's understanding of the gospel. If in Paul's thinking, the gospel is of significant importance to the individual, then we are likely to discover this in these verses. Of particular importance in the gospel as introduced in verse 16, is the theme of δικαιοσὺνη θεοῦ, and given the attention that Paul pays to this idea as his exposition unfolds in chapters 1–3 particularly, it is important to come to a conclusion as to how much the righteousness language of Paul in Romans revolves around collective issues about the identity of the people of God, and how much Paul has individual soteriology in mind. Our study will include a discussion of how best to interpret Paul's talk about righteousness in this respect.

The next passage selected is 3:21–26, which gives us an opportunity to review the progress of Paul's argument to the Romans to this point, and to discuss one of the major themes of Romans, that of faith, and its relevance to the individual. The operation and function of faith is of considerable importance in our study, given its centrality in Paul's gospel and in Romans. It is important to come to a conclusion as to how satisfactory it is to focus on the social function of faith, as a characteristic of the true people of God, or if there needs to be additional stress on the personal exercise of faith. How faith might actually be said to work in individuals who exercise faith will be of considerable importance to our deliberations.

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[45] See the opening paragraphs of Chapter 7 for details of this.
[46] J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (Dallas, Word, 1988), lv–lviii.

These two texts from the first four chapters of Romans give us an opportunity to evaluate the importance of the individual to Paul in a section of the letter where he specifically concentrates on explaining the operation of God's salvation in the world.[47] Finally, we will consider 7:7–25, which affords a similar opportunity in a section of Romans (chs. 5–8) which is often seen as one which deals with the ongoing effects of the gospel in the lives of believers.[48] The extent to which we can detect a Pauline emphasis on, or concern with, the individual in these three texts, then, should allow us to draw some general conclusions about the degree to which Paul is concerned with individual soteriology in Romans 1–8.

In 7:7–25, then, we will try to understand the identity of the "I", as we seek to understand the passage within Paul's overall argumentation. This, of course, has been the source of a great deal of debate, and there are a number of difficult textual problems to be addressed. The seemingly very personal language used by Paul here by no means makes it certain that Paul is speaking autobiographically, and it cannot be taken for granted that it is a personal, interior struggle with sin that Paul has primarily in mind in this passage. As we will see, a number of scholars interpret the passage as representing much more corporate issues and concerns. Romans 7, then, will further enhance our understanding of the relevance of the Pauline gospel to the individual.

Other passages in the first half of Romans could well have been selected—evidence in Romans 1, for example, could be examined to evaluate how Paul's thinking about sin presents for us a general anthropology and thus relates to the individual, ch. 4 might be analysed to discuss further the nature of faith, and in ch. 8, Paul's talk about life in the Spirit offers more possibilities for comprehending how he understood the gospel to relate to the individual. There are

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[47] J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 50, suggests that 1:18–3:20 deals with the "universal indictment" which covers both Jews and Gentiles, and 3:21–5:21 expounds "how God's righteousness operates through faith for all".

[48] E.g. J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 301 entitles the section of his commentary on 6:1–8:39 as "The Outworking of the Gospel in Relation to the Individual", and suggests that Paul here deals with the effect of the various negative factors of ἁμαρτία, θάνατος, νόμος and σάρξ in the lives of those who have experienced the righteousness of God, the operation of which has been Paul's theme to this point; A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, transl. C.C. Rasmussen (London, SCM, 1952), 187f., sees chs. 5–8 as Paul's explanation of what the new age of life in Christ means for the individual believer.

more possibilities for doing this in chs. 12 and 13, too, in Paul's discussions on roles within the community, spiritual gifts and ethics. Chapter 14, while dealing with the broad group categories of "strong" and "weak", potentially has room for discussion of the implications of Paul's argument about the principles of conscience for the individual (v. 12—"ῥα οὖν ἕκαστος ἡμων περὶ ἑαυτου λόγον δώσει τῷ θεῷ"). Chapters 9–12 clearly reflect Paul's thinking with regards to people groups, in particular the status of Israel within the unfolding purposes of God—this can be clearly admitted and understood within the overall argument of Romans without denying Paul's interest in the individual and the salvation of the individual. That Paul was concerned about his own nation and about how it relates to the new People of God is the whole point of this section of the letter; indeed his concern with the relationship between Jews and Gentiles is evident throughout and not in dispute. The argument here is simply that it does not make up the sum total of Paul's thinking in Romans.

There is much additional material, then, in Romans to take this investigation further. The three passages selected, however, must suffice and, because they address the Pauline gospel in its application to both unbeliever and believer, will enable us adequately to address the subject in hand.

If this study were to be successful in questioning the strong collective emphasis in recent approaches to Romans and in indicating that Paul's Roman gospel had a primary application to the individual, then it should indicate that we might seek a more balanced approach in approaching Paul generally, and that his other letters might also throw the individual into more sharp relief. Once we begin to reckon with the natural collective bias within the social scientific approaches to understanding the New Testament we become freer to recognise that the New Testament writers might have much more than has recently been allowed to say about the nature of humankind, the plight of individuals, the salvation of individuals, their experience of God and their behaviour. There is then good potential for exploring how widespread are these themes throughout the New Testament, both in the letters and, indeed, in the gospels.

This study is offered, then, by way of making a small start to redressing the balance in the way in which we understand Romans and by implication, potentially the rest of the New Testament. It does not by any means deny the historical issue with which the first Christians grappled, that of how Jews and Gentiles relate in the

unfolding purposes of God in Christ or the value of trying to understand the socio-historical background of the period—it simply suggests that there are good reasons not to see this as the entire framework in which to understand the Pauline texts, and that the theological matter of an individual's relationship to God was an important element in Paul's gospel. The possibility that such a balance of approach might be important with other New Testament texts should be the subject of further research.

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PART ONE

THE SELF AND INDIVIDUALITY IN THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

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CHAPTER TWO

MODERN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE SELF & CULTURE

The Primacy of the Self

Cohen has presented a telling critique of anthropology and the social sciences generally, with respect to their attitude to the individual. In Cohen's view, Western social science typically derives the individual from the social structures to which they belong, seeing the individual as merely a member of the village, caste or other collectivity to which he or she belongs. In this perspective, individuals merely reflect the characters of these corporate entities. The key concept in anthropological thought, culture, is often seen as an intractable social force imposed on members of society, providing the shared values and common ways of behaving which underpin the structural mechanisms by which a person is bound to society. The tendency is very strongly towards seeing the self as both constructed and determined by the collective.

Cohen's quite distinctive view is that the capacity of individuals to reflect on his or her own behaviour—i.e. to be self-conscious—is of vital importance, yet is scarcely taken into account by European social theory. For Cohen self-consciousness means that individuals are active, creative agents, who are far from powerless in the face of society and culture. Culture and the structures and contexts of public social behaviour do not impose meaning on individuals; rather it provides a framework, in which individuals operate in a dynamic, interpretive, and pro-active manner. Cohen argues, then, that people do work within the framework that society gives, but are not completely determined by it. The self, for Cohen, is not constructed by social membership, induction into new groups or social structures; rather, "the self has primacy".[1] By this he means that people are first and foremost self-conscious individuals who make their own worlds through their acts of perception and interpretation, with the external world being filtered by the self.

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[1] A.P. Cohen, *An Alternative Anthropology of Identity*, 114.

For Cohen, culture is located not "out there, somewhere", it is not some intangible force somewhere in the collective, but is to be found in the interpretive, sense-making capacities of social members. Instead of seeing it as an intractable, social force imposed on its members, we should see it as continuously recreated by their creative, interpretive powers. It is individuals, who, because of their capability of self-consciousness are the agents of culture, and not organisations. It is individuals who experience the forms of society—the rites, metaphors, names, symbols and so on—and who create for themselves meaning out of it all. External forms of society can never be said to have a uniform meaning to everyone who experiences them. We "cannot take for granted the existence of common understandings and meanings among closely knit groups of people".[2] To take such a view would simply be far too simplistic, and would be to deny the individual thinking self. For Cohen, culture is quite simply the product of thinking selves, which filter and process their social experiences through their own perceptions.

For this reason, then, Cohen believes that the social sciences have paid far too much attention to the role of society in self formation,[3] and that a much better approach, and one much more in tune with our experience, is to focus on the *a priori* nature of the active, creative, thinking self.[4] Furthermore, Cohen forcefully argues that there is no basis at all for believing that the fundamental role of self consciousness in culture interpretation and formation is any different in pre-modern, non-industrial or in non-Western societies.[5] Self consciousness is and always has been the essence of humanness and is always the primary determinant of behaviour.

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[2] A.P. Cohen, *An Alternative Anthropology of Identity*, 17.

[3] On this point, also D.H. Wrong, "The Oversocialized Conception of Man in Modern Sociology", *American Sociological Review*, April 1961, 183–93. Wrong challenges the prevailing views of his discipline of sociology regarding the deterministic force of society and refers to "forces in man that are resistant to socialisation". He makes a plea for more balance in sociology and more account of the insights of psychology.

[4] J. Rainwater, *Self Therapy* (London, Crucible, 1989), 9. Rainwater notes, "We are what we make of ourselves", and that the self is not simply something to be acted upon by the world around. Rather there are "psychological processes of self-formation" and an "active process of self-construction".

[5] A.P. Cohen, *An Alternative Anthropology of Identity*, 170; also see R.H. Turner, "Articulating Self and Social Structure", in K. Yardley and T. Hohness (eds.), *Self and Society: Psychological Perspectives* (Chichester, John Wiley & Sons, 1987), 121.

Such a view has emerged from time to time within sociology as well. Goffman, in some of his work, implies that beneath the socially constructed self, there is an "inner self", or a "naked self", which exists behind an officially prescribed public self. Goffman's study of people living in institutions indicated that despite the highly prescriptive nature of these social situations, people resisted and rebelled against the system, revealing an inner, self-determining self that was not wholly socially defined.[6] More recently, Giddens' work on self-identity takes a more nuanced view of the self than many other sociologists. Giddens takes into account the reflexive awareness that is characteristic of all human action and admits that "to be human is to know, virtually all of the time, in terms of some description or other, both what one is doing and why one is doing it".[7] Like Cohen, Giddens is prepared to talk about creativity in relation to an individual, by which he refers to "the capability to act or think innovatively in relation to pre-established modes of activity".[8]

Cohen's approach is borne out by others in recent anthropological literature. Rorty, too, recognises the individual self as a world maker and suggests, "the dynamic of society must be sought among individuals as well as at the collective and structural levels".[9] For a long time, individuals were not seen as proper topics for central anthropological investigation. The seminal articulation of anthropology's theory of culture was Boas in 1911, who created a view of culture that was somehow external to individuals.[10] The individual became unimportant, subordinate to culture which took on a privileged and dominant position within the discipline.[11] Culture in many ways became "thinglike",[12] an unchanging, monolithic entity determining the behaviour of a society's members, and the prevailing view in anthropology has been of culture as the collective property of a

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[6] E. Goffman, *Asylums*. See also A. Fontana, "The Mask and Beyond: The Enigmatic Sociology of Erving Goffman" in J.D. Douglas et al. (eds.), *Introduction to the Sociologies of Everyday Life* (Boston, Allyn & Bacon, 1980), 62–81.

[7] A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991), 35.

[8] A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 41.

[9] R. Rorty, *Contingency, Language and Solidarity* (Cambridge, CUP, 1989), 118.

[10] F. Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man* (New York, MacMillan, 1911).

[11] R.I. Levy, "Person Centred Anthropology" in R. Borofsky, *Assessing Cultural Anthropology* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1994), 180–89.

[12] R.M. Keesing, "Theories of Culture revisited", in R. Borofsky (ed.), *Assessing Cultural Anthropology* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1994), 302.

society, which exists apart from, and independent of, individual members. Typical of the anthropological approach to culture is Kottak who defines it as "the traditions and customs that *govern* behaviour and beliefs",[13] (my italics) or Geetz who views it as located in public institutions, performances and symbols, as opposed to using cognitive models.[14]

More recent anthropological approaches, however, have questioned a view of culture that sees it as a socially shared body of ways of thinking and acting that is determinative of the actions of a society's members. Goodenough makes the point that what people seem to share in both language and culture is not understood in the same way exactly by any two individuals,[15] and wants to focus attention more on the individual response to society's customs and traditions. For Goodenough, the ultimate locus of culture is in the individual.[16]

If this is so, then it calls into question the long assumed notion of the cultural construction of person-hood, agency and emotion.[17] When society's customs and traditions are assumed to be "out there" somewhere, forming an external force called "culture", which impinges upon individuals, causing them to act in ways similar to other individuals in that society, then the self becomes something formed by society and individuals are seen as simply playing "rôles". In this view, society, social symbols and rites take on prime importance in the attempt to understand human behaviour. This has been the dominant way of thinking in both sociology and anthropology until recently.[18] Now some anthropologists are beginning to question long-held theories. This has been partly prompted by modern neuroscience, which has given rise to cognitive models of culture.

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[13] C.P. Kottak, *Anthropology: The Exploration of Human Diversity*, 5th edition (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1991), 17.

[14] C. Geetz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, Basic Books, 1973), 12.

[15] W.H. Goodenough, "Towards a Working Theory of Culture", in R. Borofsky (ed.), *Assessing Cultural Anthropology*, 262–275.

[16] W.H. Goodenough, *Culture, Language and Society*, 2nd edition (Menlo Park, California, Benjamin Cummings, 1981), 53–54; N.J. Rapport, *Diverse Worldviews in an English Village* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1993) also argues for the way in which individuals can manipulate their own culture for their own advantage.

[17] R.M. Keesing, "Theories of Culture revisited", in R. Borofsky (ed.), *Assessing Cultural Anthropology* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1994), 305.

[18] Even in social models such as social identity theory which admit personal and individual elements as constituent of the self along with socially derived aspects, the emphasis is on the social and the occurrence of group behaviour; cf. M.A. Hogg & D. Abrams, *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes* (London, Routledge, 1988).

In this way of thinking, our thoughts and actions are determined by learned prototypes—personal experiences that remain in memory—as opposed to features of the external world. What we refer to as cultural consists in each individual as schemas of interconnected neuron-like units in our brains. People in the same social environment experience the same sort of events, and internalise these frequently repeated patterns of association as strong neural connections, and so build up the same typical neural patterns.[19] All this results in what we come to recognise as shared experience or outlook in people within groups or sub-groups. Yet, because it is all at an individual, cognitive level, there are individual differences as well. Such models support Cohen's view of the individual as creative agent, processing the information from his experience in society. It also recognises the shared nature of behaviour and worldviews within groups.

Borofsky, too, uses recent neuroscientific research on memory to locate cultural patterns and rules which result in social activity in certain parts of the brain,[20] which he again uses to explain both the shared nature of the cultural and individual differences. It seems different parts of the brain are used for what is called "explicit" memory—i.e. conscious recollection of previous experiences—and "implicit" memory, which refers to unintentional, non-conscious memory. Borofsky views cultural patterns of behaviour as typically not readily verbalised or made conscious—people in similar groups just do act in similar ways—and suggests that adherence to cultural norms is a function of implicit memory. This of course is now firmly located in an individual's brain. In this model, then, common social patterns are recognised, but not at the expense of the individual. And because the individual is so important in this schema, intracommunity diversity is now easily explained.

In these more cognitive anthropological models for understanding social behaviour, the individual plays a much more active rôle—as Cohen insists, it is self-consciousness that is the key determinant of human behaviour, and indeed culture. Individuals have a personal

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[19] C. Strauss & N. Quinn "A Cognitive/Cultural Anthropology", in R. Borofsky (ed.), *Assessing Cultural Anthropology*, 284–300.

[20] R. Borofsky, "On the Knowledge and Knowing of Cultural Activities", in R. Borofsky (ed.), *Assessing Cultural Anthropology*, 331–48. He quotes in particular B. Knowlton, S. Ramus, L. Squire, "Intact Artificial Grammar Learning in Amnesia: Dissociation of Classification Learning and Explicit Memory for Specific Instances", *Psychological Science* 3(3), 172–79.

understanding of their own group habits and styles of behaviour which in fact aggregate to form what can be observed as their culture.[21] There is much more emphasis nowadays on the changing and inconsistent nature of culture, and of the diversity within groups, and recognition of the individual's own active response to his or her social world helps explain the constant change in the cultural.

But an emphasis on the primacy of the self also draws attention to the similarities between what were often considered diverse cultures and societies. Keesing has criticised the "them/us" attitudes of previous generations of anthropologists, who have often characterised "primitive" peoples as being "subjugated to conservative forces of tradition, lack of individuation in their lives, the unseen force of social convention".[22] Non-modern, non-Western societies, whether modern-day primitive tribes, or the Classical, or Hellenistic worlds, are often characterised in this way, with little regard given to the power of self-conscious individuals acting within their own worlds. The essence of the human beings who lived in these ancient societies was the thinking self, their own self-conscious beings, which were active in forming and changing the cultural in their own day. We may well recognise very distinct differences between their worlds and our own, but we cannot deny to these people thinking self-consciousness.[23] This is precisely what has been missed by many of the approaches to the New Testament period that have sought to use methods and insights from the social sciences in recent years. There has been an emphasis on the determining power of the social on the self to the detriment of a proper understanding of the individual.

Conclusions

We have seen, however, in this brief discussion of some current trends in sociology and social anthropology, that caution is required when considering the question of the relationship between the indi-

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[21] W.H. Goodenough, "Towards a Working Theory of Culture", in R. Borofsky (ed.), *Assessing Cultural Anthropology*, 267.

[22] R.M. Keesing, "Theories of Culture revisited", in R. Borofsky (ed.), *Assessing Cultural Anthropology*, 306.

[23] A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 75. "'Individuality' has surely been valued—within varying degrees—in all cultures and so . . . has the cultivation of individual potentialities".

vidual self and the society of which it is a part. Models that focus on the determining power of the social group and the cultural upon the self seem to be much too simple and display an in-built disciplinary bias towards the social. When the fundamental role of self consciousness in culture interpretation and formation is recognised, and the evidence of neuroscience and cognitive models of culture formation are considered, the self-determining, creative and pro-active nature of the individual comes to the fore, and warns against too much focus on the collective.

This is not to claim that the world of the New Testament was anything like our own age in terms of our modern characteristic of individualism. Cohen makes a useful distinction between individualism, individuality and selfhood. Modern Western society is characterised clearly by *individualism*, which can be described as a "dogmatic posture which privileges the individual over society".[24] *Selfhood* refers simply to self-consciousness, that defining essence of all humanity, everywhere, at all times, and *individuality* is a property of selfhood, the perception by others of an individual's distinctiveness. Clearly, it is possible to argue for the importance of selfhood and individuality, whilst recognising that a society is not characterised by individualism, or is more collectively oriented, as the Hellenistic world clearly was. It is to explore these ideas with regard to the Hellenistic world to which we turn in the next section.

[24] A.P. Cohen, *An Alternative Anthropology of Identity*, 177.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUALISM IN THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

The Self in the Ancient World

It has been claimed that the ancient Greeks were "unable to grasp the true nature of a human being . . . they grasped little, and conveyed less, of genuine human individuality".[1] The Homeric literature, dating back to the late eighth century BCE,[2] and a staple of the Greek education system throughout the classical and Hellenistic periods,[3] is often seen as depicting human beings as primitive and unreflective. Snell, for example, claimed that Homeric man was not a whole person and possessed no self in the way that we would understand it, and thus had no real decision making powers. He felt these people had no real sense of the unity either of body, or of body and soul, and denied that they had any idea of "will".[4] Here we have a picture painted of a society made up of people who had no real sense of the boundaries of their own bodies, no capacity for self-reflection, deliberation and decision—in short none of the capacities that we would normally associate with being human. There is here, in fact, a denial of self-consciousness. This is typical of an evolutionary view of human sociological development where human beings only gradually emerge into a more individualised self-consciousness with a growing self-differentiation from the world,[5] resulting in a much greater sense of individual independence.

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[1] U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Internationale Wochenschrift für Wissenschaft und Technik*, 1 (1907), 1109–10 quoted in C. Pelling, *Characterisation and Individuality in Greek Literature* (Oxford, OUP, 1990), 245.

[2] B. Knox, "Introduction" in *The Odyssey*, Homer, transl. R. Fagles (New York, Penguin, 1996), 3.

[3] B. Knox, "Introduction" in *The Odyssey*, Homer, 12. "The Homeric epics were familiar as household words on the mouths of ordinary Greeks".

[4] B. Snell, *The Discovery of Mind* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard Univ. Press, 1951).

[5] G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, transl. J.E. Turner (Gloucester, Peter Smith, 1967) is typical of the structuralist-functionalist approach to the development of religion where this outlook is common.

Such a view is really quite unbelievable. We are being asked to believe that in the long history of human evolution, the nature of what a human being actually is was startlingly different from what it is today, less than three thousand years ago. And when we turn to the Homeric literature, even a cursory reading of it shows the characters to be very much as we expect human beings to be—constantly deliberating, deciding and then acting. This is often followed by regret and the character wishing he had done otherwise.[6] Williams finds Snell's arguments to be a "systematic failure".[7] He finds true deliberation and decision in Homer, and argues that even though the gods play a part and make their case to the human characters, they are simply acting as hidden causes behind the human action, and do not represent a replacement of human will. Williams suggests that it is "hard to . . . understand how we could understand the Homeric poems as speaking of human action at all unless we could find in their words the presence of . . . belief, desires and purposes".[8]

In the Iliad, at first glance, the events of the poem would seem to be the creation of the will of Zeus and Apollo—the gods are seen to inspire, restrain, terrify and rescue individuals as the epic proceeds. In the quarrel, for example, in Book 1, Achilles refrains from killing Agamemnon because Athena takes him by the hair and restrains him. Homer's idea of divine intervention, however, is subtler than at first appears. In this instance, when Achilles is restrained by the god, Homer tells us that just before drawing his sword, Achilles considered the alternative:

> Should he draw the long sharp sword slung at his hip,
> Thrust through the ranks and kill Agamemnon now?—
> Or check his rage and beat his fury down?
> As his racing spirit veered back and forth,
> Just as he drew his huge blade from its sheath,
> Down from the vaulting heavens swept Athena . . .[9]

It seems, then, that Homer presents for us both divine intervention and human independent action supervening on the one action. Perhaps it all depends from what perspective the action is viewed. In any

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[6] B. Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1993), 21–49.

[7] B. Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 29.

[8] B. Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 35.

[9] Homer, *The Iliad*, 1.224–229.

case, in this instance (and in other similar passages) there is little sense of the individuals simply being puppets of the gods. There is genuine deliberation and action. In addition, there are passages in the Iliad where there is no hint of divine intervention, where a person clearly chooses between alternatives and comes to an independent decision. Odysseus, for example, debates with himself whether to run or to fight, when hard pressed in the midst of battle:

> Odysseus probed his own great fighting heart:
> O dear god, what becomes of Odysseus now?
> A disgraceful thing if I should break and run,
> Fearing their main force—but it's far worse
> If I'm taken all alone.[10]

He eventually comes to the decision to stay and fight—by "weighing it all, heart and soul".[11] Odysseus' decision is motivated by fear of being thought cowardly by others, but nevertheless indicates independent, internal reflection, and decision. Interestingly, when Menelaus is in the same situation, he too debates the situation within, but comes to the opposite decision to withdraw from battle.[12]

Although the Homeric poems are liberally sprinkled with the participation of the gods in human action and decision, and there is undoubtedly a strong value system of honour which motivates behaviour, there can be no question of the self-conscious, deliberate behaviour of the characters in the epic, who are seen to display a full range of human emotions, including love, hate, envy, joy and personal emotional suffering. Furthermore, we see characters act in quite individualistic ways, defying their community and taking a quite solitary course. This really, is the essence of the story of the Iliad, where Achilles is prepared to put the army of which he was a part at risk for the sake of his quarrel with Agamemnon and his own internal sense of honour. The ideals which motivated Achilles may not be ones which would motivate us today, but nevertheless, his own internal sense of what was the right course of action led him to act in a way that was quite self-promoting and at times, detrimental to his community.[13]

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[10] Homer, *The Iliad*, 11.477–481.
[11] Homer, *The Iliad*, 11.487.
[12] Homer, *The Iliad*, 17.101–121.
[13] C. Pelling, "Conclusion" in C. Pelling (ed.), *Characterisation and Individuality in Greek Literature*, (Oxford, OUP, 1990) 245–262, 260, refers to Achilles, "who sees things in so distinctive a way, and whose individuality sets him at odds with the values of his community".

Another classical scholar, Lloyd Jones, also disagrees that the ancient Greeks had no knowledge of concepts now held to be essential for the process of reflection and decision. He suggests that although Homer's account of thought and action was different from ours, "scholars have underrated the early Greeks' comprehension not only of intellectual, but of moral processes".[14]

In a discussion of individuality in classical Greek literature, Pelling admits that in Greek plays, the characterisation is simple, and there is little psychological depth to the characters, but that the authors do often manage to invite their audiences to place themselves "in the other man's soul".[15] He notes that in this ancient drama there is a concern with agonising decision making, with a clear implication of a self with its own complexities. A concept of self, similar to our own, he says, is clearly implied by the description of Odysseus as "speaking to *his* soul". In Greek tragedy, characters are not idiosyncratic in the way they are in modern, twentieth century novels, but they are nevertheless individuals. Sometimes the playwrights combined in their characters traits which seemed to group together naturally, but they were never just types—they were distinct and recognisable individuals.[16] Pelling, then, sees in Greek tragedy a certain measure of individuality. Outside tragedy, he notes that one of the reasons in Thucydides for the fall of Athens was the emergence of people who could not only be described as individuals, but as *individualistic*, those who followed their own interests, rather than that of the common good.[17]

A good example in Thucydides occurs in his discussion of the defeat of the Athenians at Amphipolis, where both Cleon and Brasidas were killed. He notes that these were:

> the men who on either side had been most opposed to peace, the one because of his success and the reputation he had derived from the war, the other because he thought if quiet were restored he would be more manifest in his villainies and less credited in his calumnies.[18]

Clearly both individuals were more interested in themselves than in the fortunes of the community. Pelling notes the individualistic traits

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[14] H. Lloyd Jones, *The Justice of Zeus* (Berkeley, London, Univ. of California Press, 1971), 158.
[15] C. Pelling, "Conclusion", 245–62.
[16] C. Pelling, "Conclusion", 251f.
[17] C. Pelling, "Conclusion", 259.
[18] *Thucydides*, 5.16.

of others in Thucydides' history, in particular Nicias and Alcibiades—"what matters is not merely the distinctiveness of the individuals, but also their egoism; it is individualism, as well as individuation, which is now vital to Thucydides' theme".[19]

We have already noted such self-serving behaviour in Homer's Achilles, and Pelling points out other early Greek figures, such as Ajax or Socrates, who also seem to undermine the expectations of the world in which they lived, and who maintained a distinctive style in the face of opposition from those around. He thus makes a strong case for the positive recognition by the ancient Greek writers of strong individuality, which must be recognised as a part of their world.

It has been noted that in ancient Greek philosophy there is no term for our modern "person" (which focuses on the essential character of an individual, as opposed to simply the concept of "human being" which describes merely the nature of the entity), or "freedom" or "will".[20] But both Gill and Engberg-Pedersen insist that it is false to suggest that there was no concept of person as an individual, self-conscious agent in the classical age. Boethius' (520 CE) definition of a person—"an individual substance of a rational nature" did not represent new thinking, but rather drew upon and summed up the classical tradition.[21]

In a more recent work, however, Gill has challenged what he sees as the modern emphasis on self-consciousness with respect to notions of the self in ancient Greek literature.[22] Gill argues that post-Cartesian and post-Kantian models of mind and ethics are overly subjective and individual-centred, and that the modern idea of self, which he characterises as "subjective-individualist" is really quite different from the ancient Greek notion. This he terms "objective-participant", which he says is based on the non-subject centred character of Greek psy-

[19] C. Pelling, "Conclusion", 259–60.

[20] C. Gill (ed.) *The Person and the Human Mind: Issues in Ancient and Modern Philosophy* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1990). This is noted both by Gill in the "Introduction", 7; and by T. Engberg-Pedersen, "Stoic Philosophy and the Concept of the Person", 109–10.

[21] C.J. de Vogel, "The Concept of Personality in Greek and Christian Thought", *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy*, 2, 1963, 20–60.

[22] C. Gill, *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy and Philosophy; the Self in Dialogue* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1996). Gill quotes Kathleen Wilkes, *Real People: Personal Identity without Thought Experiments* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1988) as representative of many modern thinkers' caution regarding the validity of modern Cartesian models of mind which give privilege to the first person perspective.

chological models, and gives a primary role to participation in interpersonal and communal relationships.[23] From Plato onwards in philosophy and also in epic, tragedy and poetry, Gill claims that ethical reflection took the form of dialectical debate and characterises the Greek image of the self as being "the self in dialogue". Gill denies that the ancient Greek idea of self was based on the self-conscious "I" with attendant notions of personal freedom or any self-understanding as having a unique personal identity. Instead he maintains that the literature reveals a psycho-ethical life which was shaped by interpersonal and communal discourse and engagement.

The objective-participant self, then, is one which deliberates and reasons through participation in community exchange and which reflects through shared debate or argument, rather than solitary introspection. This self is concerned about the good of human life in general, rather than private life goals.[24]

If by all of this, Gill were simply arguing for the much greater importance of community and shared values through interpersonal relationships in Greek society, and that ethical reflection depended much more in that culture than in our own more individualistic culture on group norms and communal dialogue—in other words, for a much more collective society, then there could be little argument. Yet Gill wants to go much further than this and to deny to the ancient Greeks any sort of privileged status to the first person perspective and to say that Greek psychological models were non-subject-centred. It is hard to understand what this really means and how a person could actually engage in any sort of debate within a community, or indeed, reflection, without being, in fact, fully self-conscious and self-aware. Self-conscious awareness is a pre-requisite for any sort of ethical reflection or thinking, whether this is done in a solitary introspective, individualistic way, or in a more communal, relational way. It is simply incorrect to confuse self-consciousness with individualism. First-person perspective does not necessarily imply individualism; it is simply a feature of self-awareness, the very essence of what makes us human.

Other classical scholars, such as Irwin and Engberg-Pedersen recognise this, and we find in their works both a recognition of the objective nature of Greek ethics which was based on engagement in

[23] C. Gill, *Personality*, 11, 12.
[24] C. Gill, *Personality*, 23.

community life, and a focus on the individual self. Both these writers presuppose an individual self-related reflection in Greek philosophy and see the essence of a human being here to be as a practical rational agent.[25]

The question of who or what we are essentially was one addressed by both Plato and Aristotle. Plato's conclusion was that our essence as human beings lies in the divine mind or rationality in which we have the capacity to participate. He saw this inner reason or νοῦς, which although originating outside the person, is our psychic essence, the locus and source of our intellectual and moral being. According to Nussbaum, Plato's understanding of the human being is as a unified psychophysical and psychological whole, as a unique individual.[26] Plato's model remained dominant in the ancient world and was shared by other philosophers, such as Aristotle, Plotinus and the Stoics, although in somewhat different ways.[27] In Aristotle, for example, we find the notion of a "true self" and the idea that a rational agent's proper concern is to perpetuate his self or "essence" as a practical rational agent.[28] Aristotle argues that the human function is the "actualisation of the soul according to reason or involving reason",[29] thus placing the essence of humanness at the level of individual internal thought and reason. At the same time, he portrays human good in a broader sense, as "the actualisation of the soul according to virtue",[30] arguing that complete self-actualisation only

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[25] T.H. Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1988), 363f.; T. Engberg-Pedersen, "Stoic Philosophy and the Concept of a Person", 110.

[26] M. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge, CUP, 1986), ch. 7.

[27] C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard Univ. Press, 1989) 115–126; C. Gill in C. Gill (ed.) *The Person and the Human Mind: Issues in Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, "Introduction", 14; T. Engberg-Pedersen, "Stoic Philosophy and the Concept of the Person", 111.

[28] T.H. Irwin, "Part III Applications of the Solution", in *Aristotle's First Principles*, 277–486. Irwin comments that Aristotle's *De Anima* argues "that the essence of human beings is their capacity for rational thought, desire and action", 346; M.V. Wedin, *Mind and Imagination in Aristotle* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1988), 160, says that in *De Anima*, where we have the most complete treatment by Aristotle of νοῦς, Aristotle's "naturalistic side wants an account of νοῦς to be an account of strictly individual noetic activity without mention of factors or entities extrinsic to embodied persons". The mind, according to Aristotle was independent of body or external factors impinging upon it, capable of directing, in an individualistic way, all of human behaviour. E.g. "One can think of what one wishes" (*De Anima*, 429b7); "Mind thinks itself" (*De Anima*, 429b9).

[29] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a7–8.

[30] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a16–17.

comes through acting in ways that benefit others. Aristotle thus recognises the potential for individual action to mitigate against the overall good of the community,[31] that it is possible to act in a way that could be seen as rational, but does not seek the common good, or is entirely selfish. The truly rational person who is concerned rationally for himself will, however, act in a virtuous way that benefits others. The possibility for other more selfish action remains. Interestingly, in Aristotle's thinking, concern for another should be altruistic, simply a concern for the other "in himself"—

> Each wishes good to the other in so far as the other is good; and he is good in himself; and those who wish goods to a friend for his own sake are friends most of all.[32]

Here is a concept of person that does not depend essentially on the person's place within the community, but rather the person's essential self. It is because of this that a person ought to exhibit friendship and do good to the other person. There is, then, in Aristotle, a deep concern with the overall good, with relationships between persons, but this is expressed against a background of individual selves which are of value *per se*, and a strong notion of individual, rational, self-realisation through acting in proper ways.[33]

The philosophers, then, understood an individual to have the power of internal reflection and the ability to take control of his own desires. Here we have an understanding of self-consciousness and agency within an individual human being, who is able to decide and act over and above either internal desires or external social influences.

Engberg-Pedersen argues strongly that the Stoics' doctrine of moral responsibility and freedom means that they thought of themselves as being in control of their own actions as opposed to them being caused from outside. They had a view of their own actions being

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[31] Aristotle notes those who are cowardly or lazy or who do terrible actions. These, however, are the result of rational decision on the part of these individuals. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1166b10–11; 1166b11–13. See comment by Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles*, 379. Plato also notes the possibility of purely selfish action—"every man is by nature a lover of self... the truth is that the cause of all sins in every case lies in the person's excessive love of self". Plato, *Laws*, 5.736–740. Individualistic, self-centred behaviour was evidently not uncommon in the ancient world!

[32] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1156b8–11.

[33] Plato, too, argues for self-sufficiency, without the need of others: *Republic*, 388a, "We say even this, that such a man most of all has within himself that which makes a good life possible. Far better than ordinary people can he do without others".

caused by their own "character", "personality" or "individual nature".[34] With regards, then, to the notion of the self, the Stoics pressed the importance of it "to such an extent that one may be tempted to claim that they even discovered it".[35]

The advice of second century Marcus Aurelius, reflecting mature Stoic thought, was to:

> Take a bird's-eye view of the world, its endless gatherings . . . voyagings manifold in storm and calm and the vicissitudes of things coming into being, participating in being, ceasing to be . . . It is in thy power to rid thyself of many unnecessary troubles, for they exist wholly in thy imagination.[36]

We have here the Stoic conviction of the entire independence of the inner self, free from influence of the changing circumstance of life. The sense of the internal life of the individual in Stoic reflection is surely without question.

When we examine writings firmly from the first century CE, we see this same confident sense of the self, the governing power of the mind and the capacity for self-motivated behaviour. Writing in the second half of the first century, Plutarch speaks of anger as an internal emotion, and discusses the ways in which this can be controlled, and does so in terms that are very familiar to modern ears. Plutarch talks of an "evil state" created in the soul, which "usually results in sudden outbursts of rage, moroseness, and peevishness". But,

> if judgement at once opposes the fits of anger and represses them, it not only cures them for the present, but for the future also it renders the soul firm and difficult for passion to attack.[37]

Here we have an extended discussion of what Plutarch recognises as an internal, individual emotion and which can be controlled by the individual's own rational decision. For Plutarch, anger is indicative of self-centred behaviour, arising especially out of "selfishness and peevishness, together with luxury and softness",[38] but is capable of being controlled and kept in check. Further evidence of Plutarch's

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[34] C. Stough, "Stoic Determination and Moral Responsibility", in J.M. Rist (ed.), *The Stoics* (Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1978), 203–231.
[35] T. Engberg-Pedersen, "Stoic Philosophy and the Concept of the Person", 122.
[36] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, IX.31, 32.
[37] Plutarch, *Moralia*, VI.454b3.
[38] Plutarch, *Moralia*, VI.461a6–7.

sense of the individual, self-contained self is found in *De Tranquillitate Animi*, where he discusses how to achieve inner peace. This comes, not through external circumstances, but through an attitude of mind that transcends these. A person needs to "examine, if possible, oneself and one's fortunes" particularly in an attitude of gratitude, comparing one's circumstances to those less well off".[39] One needs to dwell on one's own good fortune and seek to develop a sense of inner calm and self-control. Here we have a very developed sense of the individual self which exists apart from and prior to society and the world around.

The classical Greek literature and the tradition of Greek philosophy from Plato onwards, then, give evidence that there was a clear understanding of the individual as a self-conscious agent, responsible for his or her own actions, clearly distinct from the natural world around and from society. Society clearly played a central part in the world-view of the people of this age, as we shall see in due course, but there is no doubting the testimony of the literature to their self-conscious individuality.

The Shame Culture of the Ancient World

Anthropologists often distinguish between "shame cultures" and "guilt cultures". Shame typically involves failure in comparison with either the achievements of others or the expectation of others and some form of external sanction in terms of one's social relationships. Here there is a reliance on these external sanctions for the promotion of good behaviour, or behaviour that is acceptable in that particular society or group. Shame is the result of being seen in an inappropriate condition by others.[40] This is most straightforwardly observed, for example, with respect to nakedness, which in most societies, is deemed inappropriate in public, and if someone knows they have been seen naked by others, they will feel a sense of "shame".

Often shame is associated with losing or saving face, and, depending on the society, the social consequences of "face" can be very important. To modern Westerners, this is a very foreign concept, and sometimes seems quite superficial, being more to do with appearance

[39] Plutarch, *Moralia*, VI.470b10–14.
[40] B. Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 75–102.

rather than reality, and the outer world of what others think than one's own inner consciousness.

The alternative type of society is one which prizes guilt instead of shame. Here the emphasis is not on social appearance, but more on absolute religious or social laws, which individuals are aware of transgressing, and feel "guilty" about, even if there is no social knowledge of the transgression.

The two types of society are often associated with either more collective societies (shame), or more individualistic societies (guilt). In the former, morality and behaviour is motivated by the individual's relationship to the collective, with shame providing the motivation to keep within the societal norms; in the latter, personal, inner conviction is the motivating force which provides the society's morality.

It has been claimed that ancient Mediterranean worlds from the time of Homer through to the Hellenistic period were examples of shame cultures, where shame and honour were the pivotal values in society, and that behaviour was largely motivated by concern for one's reputation and social standing, based on common understandings of the rules for human interaction and social boundaries.

Adkins, for example, claims that our modern sense of duty was lacking in archaic Greece, and argues that the culture in the Homeric literature was clearly based on shame,[41] where individuals were overwhelmingly concerned with their own success at the expense of other people. Williams agrees that Homeric society was a shame culture,[42] and considered that it persisted, albeit in altered forms, into later antiquity and longer. Lloyd-Jones also admits that Homer's culture was one where honour and shame were prominent—this is bound to be the case, he says, where Olympian religion consisted of many gods, each jealous for his or her honour, competing vigorously for it, and demanding it from human beings.[43]

Lloyd-Jones, however, considers it insufficient simply to describe this age as a shame culture and sees, for example, justice and guilt, as well as shame and honour, in the Odyssey. Shame and honour

[41] A.H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values* (Oxford, OUP, 1960).

[42] B. Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 78. Williams considers unpersuasive attempts to deny that Homeric society was a shame culture. Cf e.g. J.T. Hooker, "Homeric Society: A Shame Culture?", *Greece and Rome*, 34, 1987.

[43] H. Lloyd-Jones, *The Academic Papers of Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1990), 253–280.

may have been prominent in Homer's culture, but there was, he claims, a constant interplay with the more introspective values of guilt and justice. Lloyd-Jones traces how these values continued to be linked closely to those of shame and honour as Greek history unfolded, through the rise of the πόλις, when the collective honour and shame of the community became important and on into the fourth century BCE. After this, as philosophy began to influence educated people, Lloyd-Jones suggests that shame and honour became much less important, in comparison with the more internalised, introspective value of guilt. He points to Democritus, a predecessor of Epicurus, in whose system honour and shame counted for little. Democritus according to Lloyd-Jones deliberately advocated guilt at the expense of shame, teaching that a person should behave in the same way if no one knew of his action, as if everyone knew.[44] Notable with regard to the question of the importance of honour also is Plato, who questioned the idea of helping one's friends and harming one's enemies, as per the early Greek code of honour,[45] and said that honour was no better than wealth as a motivating force in a person's life;[46] and Aristotle, who also insisted on the relative nature of honour:

> men like friendship for its own sake, whereas honour is craved for selfish motives . . . from which we infer that it is more valuable than honour.[47]

Furthermore Aristotle prefers the "right" rather than honour;[48] and overall concludes that:

> honour after all seems too superficial to be the Good for which we are seeking.[49]

With the loss of independence and importance of the Greek city states, the individual was no longer a citizen of a complex, organised community competing for honour amongst peers, but an inhabitant of a vast, uncertain universe, and it was to such emerging

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[44] Democritus, frag. 264.

[45] Plato, *Republic*, I, 335 A. "Whereas we previously said that it was just to do good to friends and harm to enemies, shall we now further say that justice is to do good to friends when they are good and to harm enemies when they are bad?"

[46] Plato, *Republic* I, 347.

[47] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, vii, 1–2.

[48] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* IV, iv, 3, "We blame a man as ambitious if he seeks honour more than is right".

[49] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I, v, 4.

uncertainty that the philosophers turned their attention. Lloyd-Jones suggests that in this new world, in general, the philosophers had little time for the ancient social values of shame and honour. The Cynics rejected outright the values of the world around; the Epicureans were entirely indifferent about personal reputation, while the Stoics taught that one should not value honour. For the Stoics, honour and shame counted for nothing, in comparison with guilt and duty.[50]

As we move, then, towards the Hellenistic age of the first century CE, it is Lloyd-Jones' view that in this rapidly changing world, shame and honour were becoming less and less important, with the popular philosophies and religions of the day preserving few elements of honour and shame.

Williams has questioned the idea that shame is merely a social value, and not an internal, introspective one, in much the same way as guilt. Shame is not just about the expectations of what others will think of particular actions we engage in. It is not just a matter of being seen. It is in fact an internalised reaction to a situation, albeit one that is dependent upon a social situation. Williams refers to the attitudes in others that our behaviour engenders—acceptance, admiration, despising, or otherwise—and suggests that these attitudes are in fact internalised by us. He refers to the "internalised other" as one whose reactions to our behaviours that we respect. This "other" is "abstracted and generalised and idealised",[51] and made internal, against which to judge our behaviour. So shame may depend upon a certain social situation, but it is something that takes place within our self-consciousness as a reaction to how we judge our social performance. In this sense, perhaps it is not so far from the concept of guilt as might first seem to be the case.

Williams proceeds to make precisely this point. He cannot accept that guilt is a distinct experience from shame, and suggests that even though there is no direct Greek equivalent to our word "guilt", the term αἰδώς" must cover not only shame but something akin to guilt as well. Williams notes that within the Greek shame culture, ideas of reparation, healing and compensation were often prominent, all concepts more often associated with guilt. In addition, forgiveness was a familiar concept in the Greek world—again, something usually thought to be more appropriate with guilt.

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[50] H. Lloyd-Jones, *The Academic Papers of Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones*, 278f.
[51] B. Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 84.

For Williams, the shame culture of early Greece is understood too simplistically, since Greek culture contained reactions and emotions similar to those associated with guilt. Psychological states near to what we refer to as "guilt" were generally referred to by the Greeks under a broader concept of "shame", but that does not mean that such inner, psychological states did not exist. Indeed, Williams notes, with reference to Euripides' Hippolytus, by the fifth century BCE, the Greeks distinguished clearly between public opinion, shame, and inner personal conviction.

Nevertheless, the persistence of shame culture into the Hellenistic world of the first century has been strenuously argued recently, most notably by Bruce Malina, who sees shame and honour, the concept of limited good, maintenance of social status and social purity rules as vital to any reading of the New Testament texts.[52] Honour for Malina is the key value which explains behaviour in the first century Mediterranean world; it is a sort of social rating which entitles a person to interact in specific ways with others, depending on whether they are equals, superiors or subordinates, according to known and prescribed cultural cues.[53] He explains in detail how honour is acquired and ascribed, and how it was considered to be a limited commodity, so that maintaining one's own level of honour was of prime importance.

All this leads Malina to characterise the first century personality as "dyadic". For Malina, the first century Mediterranean person had no sense of his or her own individuality or uniqueness and no interest or concern with the psychological reasons behind his or her, or anyone else's behaviour. Such a person, Malina claims, would have had no comprehension at all of our modern idea of an "individual"—a distinctive, unique, self-aware whole, with a sense of others as also distinct and unique beings. Rather, this historical person exemplified dyadism, a need of others for self formation and identity.[54] For Malina, the self in this culture was entirely socially formed and maintained and "meaningful human existence depends upon an individual's full awareness of what others think and feel about him, and

[52] B.J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (London, SCM, 1983); B.J. Malina & J.H. Neyrey, "Honour and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World" in J.H. Neyrey, *The World of Luke-Acts. Models for Interpretation* (Peabody, Mass., Hendrickson, 1991), 25–65.

[53] B.J. Malina, *The New Testament World*, 28.

[54] B.J. Malina, *The New Testament World*, 51–70.

his living up to that awareness".[55] Malina goes so far as to claim that individual psychology, uniqueness and self-consciousness were of no consequence, and that motivation for behaviour stemmed entirely from shared cultural stereotypes. The first century individual would not have perceived of him or herself as unique, but as embedded within a particular group. His "total self-awareness emphatically depends upon such group embeddedness".[56] Further, such a person would only have understood others by thinking of them as a type of the group to which they belonged, as opposed to having any individual, idiosyncratic features of their own. Malina goes on to claim that such was the lack of individual psychology of these people, that they did not relate to one another in anything like the intimate, personal or individual way in which we relate to one another today.

Group norms and expectations were thus the complete basis for determining behaviour, and in such a society, honour and shame were the pivotal values. Malina works this model out in some detail, detailing the operation of a "limited good" society within a patron-client system, where behaviour was strictly controlled, and also purity rules which brought order and meaning to the world.

Malina, however, surely overstates his case. Undoubtedly elements of earlier shame cultures persisted into the world of the first century Mediterranean, but we have noted the views of scholars like Lloyd-Jones and Williams who contend that earlier shame cultures were beginning to diminish by the fifth century BCE, and that there was little adherence to concepts of shame and honour in the philosophies that began to flourish from this time onwards in the Greek world. In addition, Chance, an anthropologist, has recently criticized the way in which biblical scholars are currently using the anthropology of honour and shame in their analysis of biblical texts.[57] He agrees with Herzfeld's unease about the "massive generalisations of 'honour' and 'shame'", which he maintains, "have become counterproductive",[58] and observes that "biblical scholars . . . all seem to draw from the same well"—Peristany's 1966 Honour and Shame,[59]

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[55] B.J. Malina, *The New Testament World*, 67.

[56] B.J. Malina, *The New Testament World*, 55.

[57] J.K. Chance, "The Anthropology of Honour and Shame: Culture, Values and Practice", *Semeia*, 68, 1996, 139–51.

[58] M. Herzfeld, "Honour and Shame: Problems in the Comparative Analysis of Moral Systems", *Man* 15, 339–51, 349.

[59] J.G. Peristany, *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1966).

the anthropology of which is "beginning to look a bit dated".[60] It seems, then, that the categories of honour and shame may be a lens used at once too simplistically and too generally through which to observe the New Testament texts.

Furthermore, the notion that all relationships were simply based on one's place within society as opposed to any emotional attraction akin to what we experience in the modern world is not one universally accepted amongst classical scholars. This notion, which again seems to stress the social over the personal, has been criticized recently by Konstan, who studied the relationship between friendship and clientship in Graeco-Roman society.[61] He concludes that the ancients "understood by friendship something quite different from relations of domination and dependency".[62] He notes Aristotle's discussion of φιλία where the emphasis is on fellow-feeling as opposed to formal obligations, and he makes a strong case that the essence of friendship in this world, as in ours, is not utilitarian responsibility and duty, but genuine affection and decision. Citing a Juvenal satire and one of Horace's poetic epistles, Konstan shows that in the Greek and Roman tradition, friendship can be thought of in similar terms to which we understand the term today and was not dependent on formal, hierarchical relationships within society. All of which indicates a quite different picture of the individual within society—again, with active and personal aspirations and possibilities—than is often allowed in many current models for biblical interpretation based on the social sciences.

So then, what are we to make of Malina's first century individual who, he contends, existed with no individual self-consciousness, was shaped and moulded entirely by the group in which he was embedded, and had no interest or consciousness of any inner, psychological states and no warmth in his human relationships? Such a person would be a shell of a human being, a social drone incapable of the behaviour that makes us truly human. Here we recall Cohen's objections to anthropological approaches which effectively deny individuals their self-consciousness and exalt the cultural and social to a position of dominance over individual human beings. In Malina we have an extreme example of such an approach. It is one

[60] J.K. Chance, "The Anthropology of Honour and Shame", 143.
[61] D. Konstan, "Patrons and Friends", *Classical Philology*, 90, 4, 1995, 328–42.
[62] D. Konstan, "Patrons", 330.

which, in an attempt to assert the difference between the first century world and our modern twentieth century world, denies the very essence of the humanity of the individuals of the first century by an overemphasis on the all-pervading power of the cultural. Such an understanding of the self as entirely socially predetermined, of course, has profound implications for the way in which the New Testament texts are interpreted. The question of whether or not the players in the New Testament dramas—the characters, the writers and recipients of the literature—had any inner, psychological aspect to their religion, or indeed, much of their lives, is one which is of crucial importance to our understanding of the origins of Christianity.

The trends in modern anthropology, which recognise the importance of self-consciousness and cognitive models of culture, combined with the classical scholarship just reviewed, indicates strongly that human beings of early and classical Greece, and the inhabitants of the Graeco-Roman world of the first century CE were human beings fully in the sense in which we understand the modern person—self-aware, conscious of him or herself as a unique person, pro-active in the world, making sense of the culture and world around, and contributing to the continual change of their era. There can be no doubt of the cultural differences between these ages and our own—and in particular, there can be no doubt that these societies were much more collective in outlook than our own, Western, individualistic society—but individuals were persons in this important, self-conscious sense.

To complete this discussion of the self in the Hellenistic world, we will now turn our attention to the collective nature of the society, and then to the rôle and purpose of religion in this period.

Individualism in the First Century

To contend that individuality and self-awareness as active agents were as much characteristics of people from the Hellenistic age as they are of modern individuals, is not to assert that the Hellenistic age did not have a much more collectivist culture than exists in our modern age. Individualism goes far beyond individuation, and little of this existed in the ancient world. A considerable mount of research has been done by anthropologists into the nature of individualistic and collectivist societies, which helps shed light on how we should view the ancient world.

Triandis, who has conducted major research into individualism and collectivism in cross-cultural studies, defines individualistic cultures as those where people's social behaviour is determined by their own personal goals, which may overlap only slightly with the goals of the collective to which they belong—the family, tribe, state and so on—and when conflict occurs, the individual will place his or her own personal goals ahead of the those of the collective. Gould and Kolb define individualism as "a belief that the individual is an end in himself, and as such out to realize his "self" and cultivate his own judgement".[63] On the other hand, a collectivist culture is one where the social behaviour of the members is determined by goals shared with the rest of the group.[64] Here, when conflict occurs, it is felt to be socially desirable to place the collective goals ahead of any personal objectives.[65]

Triandis highlights the major contrasts between collective and individualists cultures as falling under four main categories:

1. *Private Self vs. the Ingroup.* In individualist cultures the emphasis is on the private self, with importance given to personal goals and personal fate, with guilt being a primary motivating factor, and there being congruency between the private self and the self exhibited in public. In more collective societies, the emphasis is on the ingroup rather the private self. Here group goals and outcomes and group harmony are of prime importance, shame is the motivation for behaviour and there is no necessary consistency between the private and the public self (one simply does what the ingroup expects).
2. *Short vs. Long-term perspectives.* Typically, individualist societies focus on immediate returns, with an outlook that spans at most one or two generations, while collective cultures look to more distant goals, possibly over dozens of generations.

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[63] J. Gould & W.L. Kolb, *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences* (London, Tavistock, 1964), 325.

[64] G. Hofstede, *Cultures and Organisations: Software of the Mind: Intercultural Cooperation and its Importance for Survival* (London, HarperCollins, 1994), 51, highlights the respective significance of the individual and the group within national cultures as representing importance national characteristics. Societies are "individualistic" where the ties between individuals are loose and "collective" where people are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups. Individualistic cultures are much less common than collectivist, and the exception rather than the rule.

[65] H.C. Triandis, "Cross-Cultural Studies of Individualism and Collectivism" in J.J. Berman (ed.), *Cross-Cultural Perspectives, Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*, 1989 (Lincoln & London, University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

3. *Individual approaches vs. Hierarchy and harmony.* In collectivism, there tends to be much more collaboration between members of the group, which is often co-ordinated by the authorities, whereas members of individualist groups tend to be much more self-reliant.
4. *Emotional Attachment to few ingroups vs. Detachment from many ingroups.* In individualist societies, people are often members of many different groups, and show little emotional attachment to any of them and can leave or join easily, whereas members of collective societies show strong attachment to very few ingroups within the larger collective.[66]

Hsu's study of individual and collective societies characterizes individualists as being self-reliant and competitive, aggressively creative, domineering, having a need to conquer others and make them adopt their systems, placing an importance on youth and the future, and exclusive to those who are different. On the other hand, collectivists are typically uncompetitive, eager to maintain the harmony of the group, content to cultivate their own habitat, interested in the past and their ancestry, and much more inclusive.[67]

Typically then, in collectivism, there is a much greater emphasis on the needs and goals of the group rather than personal ones, and there is a greater readiness to co-operate with group members. In addition, it is much more important for individual behaviour to be motivated by social norms than by ideals of personal objectives or pleasure. Adherence to beliefs shared by the group is viewed as much more important than beliefs which might distinguish someone from the group.

Triandis suggests that the major determinants of the emphasis within a society are cultural complexity and affluence.[68] Cultural complexity due to physical separation leads to distinctions between individuals and groups and therefore different life-styles, all of which results in conflicting norms and world-views within a single society. In such a situation, an individual decides how to act on the basis of internal factors rather than the norms of the collective. Affluence simply leads to greater personal choice and independence. With

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[66] H.C. Triandis, "Cross-Cultural Studies of Individualism and Collectivism", 59f.
[67] F.L.K. Hsu, *Rugged Individualism Reconsidered* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1983).
[68] H.C. Triandis, "Cross-Cultural Studies of Individualism and Collectivism", 44f.

enough personal resources, one does not have to do what others want. With these factors in mind, Triandis traces the increasing individualism displayed by societies as they move from being mainly agricultural to industrial and finally information cultures. Interestingly, he suggests that hunter/gatherer societies are actually much more individualistic than agricultural societies, and considering the way that such societies have often evolved into more agriculturally based cultures, there is here a serious criticism of anthropological models that have simplistically assumed a growth in individualism through history as humankind has become more sophisticated. In such models primitive peoples are viewed as having very little sense of the individual self, but, according to Triandis, independence and self-reliance are features of primitive hunter/gatherer societies. It seems that individualism or collectivism is a feature of societies depending on the requirements of the society, and is not a feature of the view of the self or the means of self-formation that is inherent there. Every person, regardless of what type of society he or she lives in, is a fully self-conscious, creative individual with his or her own individual objectives and goals and inner means of processing and making sense of the shared values, or culture of the society in which he or she lives. This does not depend on whether or not the society is more collective or individualist. The individual's own inner motivations and goals will vary, depending on the value system he shares with others in his or her group, and each person will act socially in a way that either tends to reflect or ignore collective goals. But the inner self remains discrete and autonomous. This is evident from anthropological research that has studied Eastern cultures, in particular the Chinese. Yu suggests, for example, that although Chinese values and goals have a strong collective and social nature, there exists a strong sense of personal, internal self-development. This can be traced to Confucian thought, which emphasises the remaking and reforming of the internal moral self.[69] Self-realisation and internal self-development, then, are important elements within the Eastern idea of the self, albeit achieved in different ways than might be the case in the West.[70]

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[69] An-Bang Yu, "Ultimate Life Concerns, Self and Chinese Achievement Motivation", in M.H. Bond (ed.), *The Handbook of Chinese Psychology* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1996), 231–32.

[70] K.A. Abbott, *Harmony and Individualism* (Taipai, Oriental Cultural Service, 1970);

Importantly, Triandis suggests that anthropological research indicates that individuals cannot be said to act in an entirely individualistic way in individualistic societies, and that there are clearly people with more collective outlooks, and vice-versa with collectivism. Both tendencies can co-exist in both society and in individuals. For example, he suggests that individualism is higher among the affluent and the socially and geographically more mobile members of every society—these people have not the necessity to depend on others so much, and can afford to ignore collective values more. There are, then, people high or low in individuality in every society.[71] This conclusion accords well with the other anthropological scholarship we have considered which denies a determining role to culture and wants to make the self a much more active, processing agent.

Summary: The First Century Situation

The Hellenistic world of the first century CE can scarcely be said to be an individualistic culture in anything like our modern Western world. Our affluent, democratic, information society breeds individualism, and social behaviour is determined almost entirely by individual goals. Family, kinship, religious and civic ties were much more important in this society, and shared values and commitments assumed great importance in the motivation of social behaviour.

Comparing this society to Triandis' and Hsu's models of collective and individualistic societies, we can readily see that group goals and harmony were highly valued, longer term perspectives were important, there was a strong interest in the past and ancestry and, typically, people exhibited strong attachment to a small number of groups within the larger collective. There is little evidence of widespread self-reliant, aggressively competitive, individualistic behaviour, with obvious detachment on the part of individuals to the groups of which they were members. Based on the criteria we have discussed,

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W.M. Tu, "Selfhood and Otherness in Confucian Thought", in A.J. Marsella, G. DeVos, F.L.K. Hsu (eds.), *Culture and Self: Asian and Western Perspectives* (New York, Tavistock, 1985), 231–51.

[71] H.C. Triandis, "Cross-Cultural Studies of Individualism and Collectivism", 55; also W.B. Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences: Effective Intergroup Communication* (Newbury Park, CA, Sage, 1991), 47 concludes that "individualistic and collectivistic tendencies exist in all cultures, but one tends to predominate".

then, this society would be classed as collective, rather than individualistic.

It was a stratified and stable society, with little movement from class to class, and social climbing was rare.[72] Ferguson suggests that everyone in this world was essentially in a patron-client relationship of some kind or another. Such social relationships indicate the way in which individuals were integrated into society, acting in accordance with strict codes of etiquette, and relying on the assistance coming from the other party in the relationship. "The relationship operated on all levels and in various groupings: between former masters and freedmen, rich and poor, generals and conquered peoples, aristocrats and *collegia* or clubs".[73]

Meeks shows how the Graeco-Roman city was typically divided into ethnic quarters, and within that, into neighbourhoods of similar trades. But beyond this, the basic unit of society was the household.[74] An individual was thus part of a wide range of close social relationships, in particular those arising from the household. The "family" was a grouping that included not only immediate kin, but also slaves, clients, hired labourers and sometimes business associates.[75] Inherent in these family relationships were a variety of obligations and expectations, along with strong ties of loyalty and affection, and individuals lived their lives largely governed by the duties and activities determined by these relationships.

Typically, groups of foreigners in a city would stick together, and often established local cults of their native gods, or voluntary associations, to give expression to their social solidarity. The voluntary

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[72] J.J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1998) 50, 73 characterises Graeco-Roman society as "split into two distinct groups, with a wide gulf separating them"—i.e. the politically privileged elite and the great mass of urban poor—and as an "inequitable, rigid system".

[73] E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1987), 45; also for the importance of the clientele system in Roman society, see, R. MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations, 50 BC to AD 285* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1974); J.K. Chow, *Patronage & Power* (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1992), 83. J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 168–69 is unconvinced, however, that patronage was such a pervasive phenomenon as has been often assumed. Nor is P.A. Brunt, *The Fall of the Roman Republic* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988), 391, who notes that the sheer numbers of non-elite people compared with the small number of potential patrons would have made it impossible for patronage links to have been important for anything other than a few.

[74] W.A. Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 29f.

[75] A.J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1983), 69.

association, actually, seems to have flourished greatly during the first century and provided social forums for a variety of groupings—trade and professional associations, neighbours, large households, or religious cults. Here an individual found opportunity for socializing, for devotion to a particular god and in burial societies, security about his eventual burial arrangements. Often the clientele system was expressed by the patronage of wealthy citizens who acted as benefactors in return for gestures of honour and gratitude.

What we see, then, in the cities of the first century Mediterranean world, is a world where social relationships played a formidable rôle in life, with individuals typically taking their place within the fixed scheme of client-patron relationships, whether within the household, or within a voluntary association of some sort of which they were a member. Choices about the development of one's life were limited for most people within a fairly stratified social situation. One saw one's life as lived within certain boundaries, along with others in the same situation, and the groupings of which one was a part—family, ethnic group, religion, association—were one's sphere of activity, and the collectivity was of great importance.

As the anthropological research has indicated, however, this need not rule out the co-existence in this society of high degrees of individuality; indeed, as we have indicated in the earlier part of this chapter, there is good evidence from classical literature onwards to indicate that a sense of individuality and individualistic behaviour both existed and was on the increase in the Hellenistic period.

In the cities of the Graeco-Roman empire which were the world of the New Testament churches, and that of the apostle Paul,[76] life and society was more complex than in the countryside, with large groups of foreigners gathered together along with the native people—merchants and tradesmen who came after the armies or seeking business, refugees or slaves displaced by war, exiles and soldiers of fortune.[77] These cities were centres of trade, and travel flourished, as people moved about to buy and sell. They were bustling, melting pots of ethnic interchange, places of novelty and constant change.

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[76] W.A. Meeks, *Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1983), 19.

[77] J. Stambaugh & D. Balch, *The Social World of the First Christians* (London, SPCK, 1989), 40, 41; W.A. Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 16.

In such a situation, it is hard to envisage the close collective life of the rural setting—the Hellenistic cities in fact gave new opportunity for the individual and individual enterprise. After Alexander's conquests, as the city-state structure had broken down, the traditional way of life began to change.[78] The close-knit community of the past was no longer the cohesive force it had once been, and individuals were now on their own.[79] What began to emerge was an increase in individualism.[80] This had arisen because of the changing intellectual climate in Greece and developments in philosophy from Socrates onwards, and also because of the momentous changes brought about by Alexander's conquests. Military conquest and Greek civil administration brought important cultural changes to the world of the ancient near east. Greek language, ideas and education all made a significant impact on the framework of life in the conquered societies, and traditional patterns of behaviour and conduct began to change and to be broken up. Possibilities arose for individual choice as opposed to simply what was inherited, giving rise to a new level of individualism.[81] This was encouraged by the higher level of education and literacy, which led to greater abstraction of thought and increased intellectualism. In addition, the spread of a money-based economy to cities throughout the empire,[82] indicated by the flourishing of trade in the period, also gave more opportunity for self-motivated behaviour.

Even in a society that we might characterise as "collective", then, there are plenty of examples of individualism, especially amongst

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[78] Y.F. Tuan, *Segmented Worlds and Self*, 156 refers to the broadening of "spatial and cultural horizons" which occurred in the wake of Alexander's conquests, and which resulted in a corresponding broadening of the mind. He sums up the situation simply by saying "Individualism flourished in the Hellenistic Age".

[79] F.C. Grant, *Roman Hellenism and the New Testament* (Edinburgh & London, Oliver & Boyd, 1962), 13. Also see reference to Meggitt in note 73.

[80] G.H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*, 3rd edn (London, Harrap, 1963), 143, refers to a "surge of individualism" which characterised the Hellenistic period.

[81] E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1951), 237, comments "Despite the lack of political freedom, the society of the 3rd century BC was in many ways the nearest approach to an 'open' society that the world had yet seen, and nearer than any that would be seen again until very modern times".

[82] F.W. Walbank, *The Hellenistic World* (London, Fontana, 1992), 159. Caution is necessary, however, in evaluating the economic opportunities of the period—Meggitt's analysis of the Graeco-Roman world suggests that industry and trade were modest and rudimentary and that there was limited economic opportunity for any but a small elite at the top of society—J.J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 41–53.

those of more noble birth or of more material substance. The opportunity they had for trade and mobility[83] is indicative of the opportunities that existed for individualism to develop.

Meggitt has recently presented a picture of life in the Graeco-Roman world which emphasises the highly stratified nature of society, which was sharply divided between the small number of socially advantaged, political elite and the vast numbers of abjectly poor *plebs urbana.* Meggitt suggests that the opportunities for trade, social advancement and travel that we have noted were part of life in the Hellenistic world were limited to a very small number within society. Another aspect of Meggitt's portrayal of the life the Empire, however, is supportive of the contention that individualism was increasingly a part of the Hellenistic world. Meggitt suggests that amongst the poor there were limited strategies for survival, and that the network of interpersonal support groups that could be drawn upon by them in times of dire need were "neither extensive nor intensive enough . . . to be particularly beneficial".[84] The cities of the Empire, he contends, were full of immigrants who had moved to their present place of residence as individuals and thus had effectively removed themselves from family ties. Friends and neighbours, suggests Meggitt, could scarcely be relied upon for assistance, since they shared the same straitened economic circumstances. The urban environment, then, produced a rather rootless population and did not foster strong bonds between people.[85] Inhabitants of the Empire's cities, thus, were in very difficult economic circumstances and, for the most part, had to rely on their own individual resources to cope.

A balanced view of this era would be to recognise the complex and changing nature of life in the Graeco-Roman city and to recognise that for some, the more affluent members of society, there were increasing opportunities for individualistic behaviour and self-advancement, whilst for others, who were amongst the poor, life was very hard with few support structures, and self-reliant behaviour was an daily imperative. This is not to say that the collectivities of which people were a part were not important elements in the culture of

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[83] Aelius, *Orationes* 26.100–101, "Now indeed it is possible for both Greek and Barbarian, with his possessions or without them, to travel easily wherever he wishes."

[84] J.J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival,* 169.

[85] It is Meggitt's view also that the trade collegia, the funeral clubs and the mystery cults that were operational in society did not offer any real sense of organised and stable community—J.J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival,* 170–72.

the day, but simply to recognise that more individualistic behaviour was not uncommon, especially amongst the more affluent members of society, but sometimes more generally as well.[86] Just because we might see this society as one where the groups of which people were a part were more important to their lives than might be the case in our society, there is no need to deny the people of this age self-conscious autonomy within the bounds of what was possible in their social situation. As in any society, in any age, human beings were active processors of the culture in which they lived, filtering their external worlds through their own, private perceptions and creating their own world of meaning through the dynamic action of their own active selves. Depending on their place in what was a fairly rigid social structure, their scope for personal choices and options differed, but, within these restrictions, individuals, like human beings everywhere, were self-conscious, pro-active agents.

Conclusions

Our discussion of the self in the world of ancient Greece reveals there is considerable unease amongst many classical scholars with the idea of the ancient self as possessing little individuality in any sense that we would recognise. The literature of the period is seen as revealing self-conscious, self-reflecting individuals who were able to take control of their own desires, who demonstrated internal moral and ethical reflection, and, indeed, could often be said to be *individualistic*, by following their own personal interests, rather than that of the common good.

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[86] E.M. Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian*, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 20 (Leiden, Brill, 1976), 234 n. 57, 257–58. Smallwood highlights Tiberius Julius Alexander (Philo's nephew), as an example of a member of a minority who was able to move beyond his station in life and build a career, becoming procurator of Judaea and eventually prefect of Egypt (66 CE) by abandoning his native Judaism and shrewdly cultivating important Roman patrons; J.M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1996), 105–107. As well as Alexander, Barclay refers to other "social climbers", Egyptian Jews of the 1st century CE who "prized their social and political privileges more than their loyalty to Jewish tradition". (107); in addition, Josephus, *Antiquitates* 18.139–140, speaks of those who "right from their birth abandoned the native customs of the Jews and transferred to those of the Greeks". Barclay suggests that these individuals' careers were helped by their disregarding of their Jewish ways—323.

A consideration of the way in which classical scholarship views what has been termed the shame culture of the ancient world from Homer through to the Hellenistic period, suggests that it is too simple to characterise this society as one where shame and honour were the pivotal values, and where behaviour was largely motivated by concern for reputation and social standing. In addition, the suggestion is that shame and honour became much less important, in comparison with the more internalised, introspective value of guilt as the world moved towards the Hellenistic age of the first century CE. Furthermore, we saw how Williams has questioned the idea of shame as merely a social value, and not an internal, introspective one. The view of Malina, however, that a shame culture persisted into the Hellenistic world of the first century, and that the collective values of this society necessitate us viewing first century selves in a radically different way from modern selves was considered, and found to be very extreme, and considered inappropriate by some anthropologist scholars. The likelihood remains that the inhabitants of the Graeco-Roman world of the first century CE were the self-aware, self-conscious, and culture-processing human beings with which we are familiar.

Finally, the question of the likelihood of the existence of individualism in the first century CE was considered and research by anthropologists into the nature of individualistic and collectivist societies considered to help us understand this. It was found that individualism or collectivism is a feature of societies depending on the requirements of the society, and is not fundamentally a feature of the self or the means of self-formation. We might observe a trend of collectivism in a particular group or society, but this does not preclude individualism or indicate that the inner self is other than discrete and autonomous. The research indicates in fact that both individualism and collectivism can co-exist in both society and in individuals. All of which suggests that we should be cautious lest a simplistic characterisation of a society as collective should blind us to the possibility of quite individualistic behaviour, and that a recognition of collectivism does not negate the existence of the self-determining and reflective individual, often concerned with very personal needs.

Our conclusion, from a brief survey of the socio-historical research concerning the Mediterranean Hellenistic world was that we should probably characterise it as a collectivist society, as opposed to an individualist one. Given the sociological analysis of individualism just

summarised, our recognition of the more family and group-oriented values inherent in this society, however, does not preclude the existence of a lively sense of the individual within this society. Indeed, the growth of self-motivated behaviour that we noted, in what was a rapidly changing world, indicates for us that the individual was indeed important in this world in an increasingly noticeable way.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE COLLECTIVE AND THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE RELIGION OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

Introduction

What, then, was the role of religion in this society? How might we characterise it—as primarily concerning the collective or the individual? And what implications might this have for the way in which we perceive religion playing a role in an individual's life? Was it entirely a social, collective matter, expressing something of the collective's identity and functioning as a force for social cohesion? How much, if at all, was religion private, inner, psychological, with devotion, conviction and belief important elements to be reckoned with? In what terms was salvation seen—was it, as Martin has suggested, merely salvation from individualism, was it deliverance for the collective from loss of identity or existence, or was there any concern with a more personal, individual salvation? It is to these questions that we now turn.

The Development of Religion in the Ancient World

In early, primitive and rural societies, sociologists suggest that an individual's life was bound up with that of the collective—the family, clan or tribe—and that religion in such a setting was based on a virtual fusion of the religion with the rest of life.[1] The rituals of primitive religion were typically to do with agricultural life, with the concern for fertility and the passing of the seasons and so on. Gods were local and tribal, and were seen as taking care only of interests that concerned the collectivity as a whole.[2] Religious acts were performed by individuals because of the role they played in the group

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[1] B. Hargrove, *Sociology of Religion: Classical and Contemporary Approaches* (Arlington Heights, Illinois, AHM Publishing Corp., 1979), 80.

[2] M. Weber "Major Features of World Religions" in R. Robertson (ed.), *Sociology of Religion: Selected Readings* (London, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969), 19–41.

and thus the religion served to bind the society together and to give individuals an identity as a member of the group. The religious society in this case was actually the entire society and religious consciousness was diffused through the whole life of the group.

This was very much the pattern of religion in ancient Greece, prior to the fifth century BCE. Religion was something that concerned everyday life, concentrating on deities which were presumed to preside over these things, and a very anthropological approach to worship was taken.[3] Religion in this period was very much a corporate or community matter[4] and its rites concerned with "securing and maintaining correct relations with the world of uncharted forces" around the community.[5]

Early Greek religion largely revolved around the agrarian cycle, with most of the religious festivals related to agriculture and designed to honour the gods which gave fertility to the crops and herds.[6] Most of the population participated actively in religious rites, with the object of pleasing the gods and eliciting favour for one's community. Religious observance took place at an individual family level, as well as in the context of clan and city. Civic life in the seventh and sixth centuries BC was very important, with society organised according to family, tribe and city. All civic ceremonies were religious and religion was an expression of the corporate identity.[7] There was, then, a close connection between religious and civil life, with all citizens involved in the rituals and festivals which integrated them into the city's community.[8] Even the panhellenic mystery cults that began to emerge from the eighth century onwards originally had a civic context.

Religion, then, for the early Greeks consisted of primitive rites to appease a variety of deities or supernatural forces with whom they believed their lives to be caught up. The well-being of the community depended on the favour of these gods which was gained by

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[3] H.J. Rose, *Religion in Greece and Rome* (New York, Harper & Row, 1959), 9.

[4] E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1987), 112.

[5] A.D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1933), 161.

[6] H.J. Rose, *Religion in Greece and Rome* (New York, 1959), 67–89.

[7] E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1987), 120–124.

[8] B. Zaidman & S. Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City* (Cambridge, CUP, 1992), 112.

offerings given in the cultus. Human life was under the influence not only of the gods, but also of the power of Fate, which was linked to astrology and magic. There was really no soteriological element to Greek religion of the classical period, since the afterlife and preparations that might be necessary for it had very little to do with what the civic religion of the Greek city was really all about.[9] Also morality was not typically closely associated with religion and ritual purity was all to do with ceremony rather than ethics. The religion of this period, then, might well be seen in the mould of the primitive religion as characterised by the sociology of religion. The structural-functionalist view of religion sees it as both reflecting and reinforcing social relationships, where its myths and rituals serve to demonstrate the divine approval on the current organisation of society. Religion in antiquity is seen from this perspective as having a primarily social function whereby it legitimised social hierarchies and consolidated group identity and social unity.[10]

Sociologists have often characterised the development of religion in history as evolutionary.[11] Otto and Menshing suggest that a major change in religious expression occurred around 800 to 500 BCE.[12] The primitive folk religions no longer answered the developments in society, and so began to decline.

This new religious outlook has been labelled "archaic religion" by Bellah and represents a stage of development where the undifferentiated consciousness of folk religion has given way to a more explicit mythology and a diversity of cults, representing a growing heterogeneity within society. Other sociologists have referred to the post-folk religion stage as "universal" religion since there was often a de-nationalisation of religious concern and the religion became diffuse among different peoples.[13]

Bellah suggests that prior to the time of the eighth century (BCE) Israelite prophets there are many indications that the religion of the

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[9] B. Zaidman & S. Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, 231.

[10] E.g. J.P. Gould in P.E. Easterling & J.V. Muir (eds.) *Greek Religion and Society* (Cambridge, CUP, 1985), 1–33.

[11] R. Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York, Harper & Row, 1970). Bellah sees the following stages in the development of religion: 1. Primitive Religion 2. Archaic Religion 3. Historic Religion 4. Early Modern Religion 5. Modern Religion.

[12] R. Otto, & G. Mensching, "Folk and Universal Religion" in L. Schneider, *Religion, Culture and Society* (New York, Wiley & Sons, 1964), 254–260.

[13] R. Otto, & G. Mensching, "Folk and Universal Religion".

ancient Hebrews involved a plurality of cults and a general orientation like other archaic religions. In addition, though, mingled with its archaic notions and rites there is an element of universalistic, transcendent faith, in the form of the tradition of covenant, where Yahweh's blessing was ultimately to reach beyond the borders of Israel.[14] For Bellah, the prophets of Israel moved that society into a third stage of development, that of "historic" religion, typically where transcendent, salvation gods appeared for a society, but where, although there was a growing sense of the individual and a need for a notion of salvation, salvation was only available to an individual through institutional channels and through participation in the "established" religion of the group of which he was a member. In fact, salvation was really more to do with the entire nation rather than the individual. Bellah suggests that in the case of Israelite religion, the concept of a covenant between Yahweh and his people was the vehicle for a salvation that would become apparent in the "Day of the Lord", when his chosen people would be vindicated by his action on their behalf.

Although, then, the development out of folk or primitive religion reflected a growing complexity in society and a greater sense of individualism, this in no way equated to modern forms of religion which emphasise the individual in a way that would have been unthinkable to the ancient world. Life was still very much centred around communities of families, cities and nations, and religion to a large extent reflected this. Concepts such as salvation still were very much a corporate issue; salvation was of concern to the individual, but largely within the context of salvation within the larger group. Yet the growth of concern for participating as an individual in such a salvation is indicative of the changing outlook of societies from the period roughly after the fifth century BCE.

Religion in the Hellenistic World

The world of ancient Greece was undergoing two major changes by the time of Alexander the Great in the fourth century BCE. There was firstly a major intellectual change. With the appearance of the Sophist movement in the fifth century BCE, came the beginnings of

[14] R. Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World*, 86f.

conscious intellectualism, as they questioned traditional customs and concerned themselves with natural law and the practical sciences of mathematics, medicine and astronomy. In addition, they questioned the very existence of the gods, or at least advanced rationalistic theories about their origins.[15] Their questions and the intellectual climate they introduced paved the way for Socrates and the stress on individualism that was to emerge in Hellenistic philosophy.

This increase in individualism was the other major change on the Greek scene, a direct result of the changing intellectual climate in Greece, developments in philosophy from Socrates onwards, and because of Alexander's conquests.

With this increased concern with the individual in the period after Alexander, psychological-religious needs began to come to prominence.[16] There was a great feeling of helplessness before Fate, a growing uncertainty about the hereafter and an inquisitiveness about the supernatural, all of which spawned widespread interest in mystery religions, magic, private cults and revelation literature.[17] These can be viewed as attempts by individuals to find protection from Fate or evil powers, to enlist the help of supernatural elements or to find healing or some form of personal salvation. As the Hellenistic age developed, we see much more personal involvement in religious activities and individual choice about participation;[18] but religious involvement was syncretistic. Devotion to a particular deity was non-exclusive and despite the emergence and popularity of new cults, the religion of the home and countryside proved quite durable during the period.[19]

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[15] Eusebius, *Preparation of the Gospel* XIV.3.7. He quotes Protagoras as saying "Concerning the gods I cannot know for certain whether they exist or not"; Sextus Empiricus, *Against Mathematics* ix.18; Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, I.37.118.

[16] A.J. Festugière, *Personal Religion among the Greeks* (Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1954).

[17] E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 165.

[18] E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 235, notes that "receiving initiation in a mystery was usually a matter of individual choice . . . and so was a significant expression of personal religion".

[19] M.P. Nilsson, *Greek Piety* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1948, transl. H.J. Rose); B. Zaidman & S. Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, 233, assert that Greek civic religion persisted into the Hellenistic period, along with the other developments of philosophy and the mystery cults, so that "the collective dimension of Greek religion with its function of providing reassurance to the civic community as a whole did not wither".

The eventual emergence of Gnosticism in the second century CE is very much indicative of the personal approach to religion that was developing and was in the air during the Hellenistic period. Here we find an intensely personal quest for enlightenment and salvation, a concern with cosmology, anthropology, and eschatology that has moved on far beyond the community concerns of folk religions.[20] The Hermetic writings, representing the pagan branch of Gnosticism, so to speak, and dating from the mid-first century CE onwards, are also indicative of an approach to religion that was highly individualistic, emphasising a search for individual redemption through knowledge and salvation as contemplative ecstasy.[21] A major focus in the Hermetic teachings was the need to free the mind from the limitations imposed by the physical body. In this way an individual would fulfil the purpose for which he was created and reach the spiritual goal of human life. The way to achieve this was by enhanced spiritual awareness:

> Earthly existence is an opportunity to train the soul . . . everything material, even our own body is foreign to our essential spiritual nature . . . free ourselves from our enslavement, develop our inner vision, and use the power of the mind to experience the Mind of God.[22]

Here we see that the individual, his self-realisation and salvation is entirely to the fore. In this manner of thinking, outward or community-oriented action counted for very little—"the mind of the Cosmos is known through thought alone".[23]

The Hellenistic philosophical schools were also an expression of the individualism of the period after Alexander the Great, and, in

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[20] F.C. Grant, *Roman Hellenism and the New Testament* (Edinburgh, Oliver & Boyd, 1962), 51. Grant comments on the growing mysticism and concern for divine revelation in Gnosticism: "all this is so strong in the Hellenistic age, when the individual has been cut adrift from his moorings and is adrift upon the open sea". The various gnostic documents in J.M. Robinson (transl. & ed.) *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 3rd ed. (Leiden, Brill, 1988) all witness to this concern with personal enlightenment and salvation. The prayer in The Prayer of the Apostle Paul, asking God to "Grant what no angel eye has seen and no archon ear has heard", while recalling the apostle's words in 1 Cor. 2:9, has a clear gnostic orientation, and is very typical of the aspirations in these texts, which are all to do with self-actualisation and inner knowledge.

[21] A.D. Nock, and A.J. Festugière (eds.), *Corpus Hermeticum* (Paris, 1945, reprint 1960).

[22] *The Hermetica*, XVI, Ignorance of the Soul.

[23] *The Hermetica*, XVI, Ignorance of the Soul.

many ways, could be said to encourage it. As the city-state structure broke down after Alexander's conquests, the traditional way of life, of religion and morality, changed. The close-knit community of the past which had assured these things was no longer the cohesive force it had once been, and individuals were now on their own.[24] In such a situation, the Hellenistic philosophers spoke to the spiritual and intellectual needs of individuals.[25]

The perspective from which the various Hellenistic philosophical schools developed their responses to the changing situation was very much based on Socrates, who maintained that the soul is intellectual and moral personality and that the first duty of a person was to cultivate his own soul. Socrates was concerned primarily with the human person, as opposed to the natural philosophy of his predecessors, and his approach led the foundation for all later philosophy and the development of ideas that were to become commonplace in Hellenistic culture and beyond.[26] Once Plato had built on Socrates' thinking by transforming the concept of ψυχή from referring to the shades and phantoms of the dead into the dynamic force that energises a living individual, the scene was set for the development of philosophical and religious ideas which focused much more on individual and personal needs than was ever the case in Greek religion before.[27]

The Hellenistic philosophical schools, then, very much concentrated on the individual and his place in the cosmos. They aimed to teach people how to live, to learn self-sufficiency and to give moral and spiritual direction. Successful living meant the self having a sense of freedom from the affairs and external concerns of this life. According to Plutarch:

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[24] F.C. Grant, *Roman Hellenism and the New Testament*, 13.

[25] A.D. Nock, *Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic Background* (New York, Harper & Row, 1964), 90.

[26] T. Cole, *Democritus and the Sources of Greek Anthropology* (London, Ann Arbor, Western Reserve University Press, 1967), 143. Cole suggests, that, after Socrates' "discovery" of the self, "Henceforth man the individual became the center of philosophic attention . . . The social aspect of human existence becomes obscured by an overriding preoccupation with the individual".

[27] B. Zaidman & S. Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, 232; J.-P. Vernant, in F.I. Zeitlin (ed.), *Mortals and Immortals, Collected Essays* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991), 186–192.

> If you become a philosopher, you will not live unpleasantly, but you will learn to subsist pleasantly anywhere and with any resources.[28]

Similar aspirations are expressed by Cebes, also writing in the first century CE, who suggests that the good man,

> will not be troubled in the least either by Pain or Grief, Incontinence, Avarice, poverty or by any other vice. For he is master of all things and is superior to everything that formerly caused him distress . . . no longer does anything cause distress to this man because he has an antidote.[29]

Inner freedom and happiness, then, were the goals of the philosophical schools, and the focus is clearly on the individual's personal development. Moreover, philosophy "provided a conscience for the age"[30] and, for many educated people in the Hellenistic period, it acted as a religion. But this was a different sort of religion from that traditionally practised in the ancient world—instead of rites and myths that are concerned with local communities, fertility and the agricultural calendar, instead of superstition and crude placating of the gods, the Hellenistic philosophies sought to appeal to individual concerns about the affairs of life and how one should conduct oneself. Grant comments on the advent of Hellenistic age in the ancient world,

> Men began to philosophise, to wonder about the meaning of life, to examine what is the best kind of life . . . for the private individual[31]

Another indication of the increasingly personal nature of religion in the Hellenistic period is that, as Nock has shown, conversion became a possibility.[32] Nock notes that with the great increase in trade and travel, foreigners often paid homage to the gods in the lands in which they settled, implying "a piety of individual relationship and not of corporate relationship, not that of a citizen to his city gods".[33] In addition, he traces the progress of eastern cults westward and shows how they were able to attract adherents outside the original

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[28] Plutarch, *Moralia* 101d.
[29] *The Tabula of Cebes*, transl. J. Fitzgerald and L.M. White (Chico, California, 1983).
[30] E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 255.
[31] F.C. Grant, *Roman Hellenism and the New Testament*, 113
[32] A.D. Nock, *Conversion*.
[33] A.D. Nock, *Conversion*, 37.

ethnic group that had exported them. All this demonstrates the individual choice that existed with regards to religious participation. Nock goes on to make the case, though, that most of these cults and religions attracted only a low level of adherence, and that strong personal commitment was relatively rare. It was to be found only in Judaism, Christianity, some of the mystery religions and in some of the philosophies. Yet that such a response, which resulted in highly personal piety, occurred at all, is indicative of the trend in that age towards a much more personalised outlook on life generally and on religion in particular.

The success of the mystery religions is indicative of how personal piety began to replace older, corporate notions of the good of the state.[34] The Egyptian mysteries of Isis, Osiris, and Sarapic, the Persian deity Mithras, and many, many more such cults flourished during the period and demonstrate a degree of spirituality and concern with personal salvation that is would have been unthinkable in a previous age.

In addition, despite the obvious social function demonstrated by Greek civic religion in terms of group unity, social identity, legitimisation of the status quo, Goodman denies that religion in antiquity only functioned

> as a sort of social cement . . . At some time in the period after Alexander the Great some individuals in the Mediterranean world began, perhaps for the first time in European culture, to find a different social role for religion and to distinguish a specifically religious sphere of life from the rest of social and political behaviour.[35]

Goodman refers to groups, most obviously the Christians, whose sole reason for being was their religion, and points out that entry into such groups was "always optional and rested on personal decision by an individual to devote himself especially to that particular deity".[36]

It should not be denied, then, that by the time Christianity arrived on the scene in the first century CE, religion did not necessarily simply function at a purely social level, but was increasingly associated with notions of personal salvation, individual illumination and self-

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[34] A.F. Segal, *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge, Harvard, 1986), 137.

[35] M. Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994), 17.

[36] M. Goodman, *ibid.*

knowledge and personal piety. All this indicates a growing personal aspect to certain forms of religion in the period and it should therefore come as no surprise to see these personal and individualistic elements of religion displayed as well within Christianity as it developed in this milieu.

Conclusions

We have seen how religion functioned within the agrarian societies of ancient Greece to enable the community to maintain correct relations with the surrounding natural and supernatural world and thus secure fertility and successful crops. In such a situation, religion was a strongly, perhaps exclusively, social matter. Its social function was to legitimise social hierarchies and consolidate group identity and social unity. The view of sociologists of religion, however, is that developments in society around 800 to 500 BCE created a growing sense of the individual and a need in religion for a notion of salvation. Around this time the beginnings of conscious intellectualism and an increase of individualism can be detected, and in the Hellenistic world we saw the emergence of more personal involvement in religious activities and individual choice about participation. The increase of personal piety can be seen through the success of the Hellenistic mystery religions, while the philosophical schools of the period very much concentrated on the individual and his place in the cosmos. In addition, we noted the increased syncretism and the way in which conversion became a possibility. Our brief review of the development of religion from ancient Greece through to the Hellenistic period seems to be consistent with the conclusions drawn in Chapter 3 about the development of more individualistic modes of behaviour in this period. Religion and philosophy, while it would be by no means accurate to characterise them as being individualistic, nevertheless suggest that more individualistic ways of thinking were becoming important, and that individual salvation was beginning to emerge as something of real interest to the people of the 1st century world.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE COLLECTIVE AND THE INDIVIDUAL IN JUDAISM

Introduction

We have noted the great changes in outlook that occurred in the Hellenistic world as it approached the first century CE, with older religious and mythological outlooks giving way to more rational philosophies that grappled with much more individual and personal questions, and the emerging social arrangements favouring more individual approaches to life, at least for those in higher social categories. All this is obviously very relevant to our understanding of the New Testament writings, for it represents the intellectual milieu in which they originated. But at least as relevant is an understanding of first century Judaism—given the framework of Jewish tradition, theology and the Hebrew scriptures in the worldview of the New Testament writers. The *heilsgeschichtlich* approach taken by many scholars emphasizes the continuity of Paul's gospel with the story of God's dealings with Israel, with the idea of promise and fulfilment being the underlying basis of Paul's theology.[1]

We want, then, to investigate how individualistic, or how collective was the outlook and thinking of first century Judaism, to see what light that may cast over our understanding of Paul.

Judaism in the Hellenistic World

Hengel has demonstrated clearly the influence of Hellenism on Judaism—politically, economically, culturally and educationally.[2]

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[1] Prominent examples include both N.T. Wright and R.B. Hays. e.g. R.B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3.1–4.11* (SBLDS 56; Chico, CA., Scholars, 1983); 'Salvation history: The Theological Structure of Paul's Thought (1 Thessalonians, Philippians and Galatians)', in J. Bassler (ed.), *Pauline Theology. I. Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1991), 227–46; N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1991).

[2] M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (London, SCM, 1974).

Moreover, he makes the case very strongly that from the middle of the third century BCE onwards, all Judaism must be regarded as "Hellenistic Judaism", and that it is unhelpful to try and differentiate between "Palestinian" and "Hellenistic" Judaism.

Hengel notes the widespread usage of the Greek language in Judaea from around 260 BCE onwards, along with the adoption of Greek names and the Graecizing of Phoenician nomenclature. He highlights the acute Hellenisation of the Jewish upper class illustrated by the construction of a gymnasium in Jerusalem in 175 BC, which was aimed at a "complete assimilation of Judaism to the Hellenistic environment",[3] and shows how influential Greek education was in Jerusalem and other Jewish cities in Palestine and elsewhere in the Graeco-Roman world.

Ferguson has noted the wide variety of response and accommodation that occurred in Judaism to the pervading influence of Hellenism, but also that the Jews maintained their distinctiveness more successfully than any other people of the Mediterranean world.[4] Yet there can be no doubt that Greek language, culture and education had its effect on the world-view and thought of the Jewish people.[5]

Hengel notes, for example, that the demonology of Judaism is more closely related to the Hellenistic/Near Eastern environment than the Hebrew Bible and that the Greek notion of the immortality of the soul became part of Pharisaic notions about the after-life (as well as resurrection).[6] In 1 Enoch there appear for the first time

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[3] M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 103.

[4] E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 342; also F. Millar, "Empire, Community and Culture in the Roman Near East: Greeks, Syrians, Jews and Arabs", *Journal for Jewish Studies* 38, 1987, 143–164. Millar notes that of all the peoples in the Roman world, it was the Jews who managed to resist the removal of their memories and identity, by keeping and acting upon their long recorded history.

[5] J.M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, is a comprehensive survey of the Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora in the Hellenistic period, which indicates the quite varied types of responses to the Hellenistic environment in which they lived. He finds evidence of both high and low assimilation or social integration in the Jewish communities and both cultural convergence (e.g. Artapanus; Letter to Aristeas; Philo) and cultural antagonism (Joseph and Aseneth; Egyptian Sibylline Oracles) in the literature. Along with a fundamental commitment to Jewish tradition, it seems that there was a variety of ways in which Jews engaged with Greek language, cultural ideas, philosophy and scholarship. Barclay, nevertheless, refers to the "thorough acculturation which we have found . . . in the Diaspora" (347).

[6] M. Hengel, *The 'Hellenisation' of Judaea in the First Century after Christ* (London, SCM, 1989), 47 and 46.

in Judaism descriptions of the kingdom of the dead which was supposed to lie in the north-west beyond the sea.[7] These have many points of contact with Babylonian and Greek mythology, including the Elysian fields and the spring Mnemosyne.[8] The resurrection which is mentioned in Daniel seems to be bound up with astral themes, also suggesting Greek influence:

> Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.[9]

This is reflected also in 1 Enoch:

> Like bright stars in heaven, you will light up and shine, and the doors of heaven will be opened to you.[10]

The idea of humans becoming stars after death had a long history in the Greek world—Plato had suggested that there exists one star for each human soul[11]—and was probably quite popularly accepted during the Hellenistic period.[12]

Von Harnack has drawn attention to the growing importance of the individual within Judaism, as a feature of Hellenisation,[13] a point taken up by Hengel, who comments:

> One fundamental feature which Jews and Greeks in the Hellenistic period had in common is the discovery of the religious individual and the individual's eschatological salvation disclosed quite personally through 'conversion'.[14]

Hengel compares, for example, the Essene summons to individuals to join their eschatological community of salvation to the joining of a *thiasos* of initiates or conversion to a philosophy guaranteeing knowl-

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[7] 1 Enoch 12–36.

[8] More details on the parallels can be found in Hengel, *The 'Hellenisation' of Judaea*, 46–47.

[9] Daniel 12:3.

[10] 1 Enoch 104.2.

[11] *Plato, Timaeus* 41d/e, "And when he had compounded the whole [i.e. the Soul of the Universe] He divided it into souls equal in number to the stars, and each several soul He assigned to one star."

[12] M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 197, notes that this idea appears on individual Greek epitaphs, signifying its popular character.

[13] A. von Harnack, *What is Christianity?* (1900), 5th ed. transl. T.B. Saunders (London, Benn, 1958), 51. Harnack refers to the growing sense in both Greeks and Jews of the "infinite value of the human soul" and highlights the "religious individualism" that was inherent in the "Greek spirit" and a major influence in Palestine.

[14] M. Hengel, *The 'Hellenisation' of Judaea in the First Century after Christ*, 48.

edge of divine reason and true life in the Hellenistic world, and concludes that the "discovery of the individual before God" was the best thing to come out of the encounter between Judaism and Hellenism. He cites the emergence of martyrdom as a force in Jewish thinking in the Maccabean period, unheard of in the Hebrew scriptures, as exemplifying the stress on the value of the individual.[15]

In 1 Macc. 2:50, when Mattathias was about to die, he exhorted his sons to be prepared to "give your lives for the covenant or our ancestors". One of them, Eleazar, did just that, by heroically, but fatally, mounting a doomed attack in the heat of battle.[16] Another incident involved another Eleazar, a scribe, who refused to eat pork in the temple at Jerusalem, and was subsequently tortured and martyred, "welcoming death with honor rather than life with pollution".[17] The next chapter of 2 Maccabees describes the horrific martyrdoms of seven brothers, who are up as examples of those who "died . . . in integrity, putting [their] whole trust in the Lord".[18]

These martyrdom stories clearly served to encourage and exhort the readers, but also to glorify those individuals who died on behalf of others. Eleazar is said to have died in battle to "win for himself an everlasting name".[19] The way in which these individuals' sacrifice is portrayed is quite new in Judaism and illustrate both the influence of Hellenism, which had a long history of glorifying heroic death, and the increasing importance of the individual.

The Jews, whether in Palestine, or in the Diaspora, could not have escaped the effects of the pervading culture of the day. The Greek language was omnipresent, and with it Greek notions and ways of thinking. In addition, Greek literature and philosophy were major cultural forces in the Mediterranean world, and must have affected the Jewish world-view to some degree. The important question to be answered is how much; in particular, to what degree was a world view that had very much been centred around God's purposes for a people, and which saw salvation very much in terms of the nation, affected by a growing Hellenistic sense of the individual and by notions of individual salvation.

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[15] M. Hengel, *The 'Hellenisation' of Judaea in the First Century after Christ*, 50; idem, *The Atonement*, in *The Cross of the Son of God* (London, SCM, 1986, 1981), 192–220.
[16] 1 Macc. 6:43–47.
[17] 2 Macc. 6:19.
[18] 2 Macc. 7:40.
[19] 1 Macc. 6:44.

Hengel finds no direct demonstrable evidence of Greek influence on Hebrew literature before Sirach, apart from Koheleth (written circa. 270–220 BCE).[20] But here he finds more influence from the world of Greek thought than in any other writings in the Hebrew bible. The writer's approach exhibits a clear sense of individual selfhood, as he seeks to fuse wisdom traditions with personal, self-analysing experience.[21] The whole book amounts to a personal search for meaning and fulfilment. Eating and drinking, enjoying work, following the inclination of your heart and the appreciation of wisdom are main results of the author's search, all very much focused on the individual's own enjoyment of life and sense of inner fulfilment.[22] There is nothing here of concern for the wider community or any evidence that the author's search for meaning in life will be found in his relationships with others. What is good, rather, is to:

> eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of the life God gives us.[23]

Kroeber believes Koheleth to be understandable only "in the intellectual atmosphere of Hellenism"[24] and Hempel suggests that it is "quite unoriental".[25] Here we have Jewish literature, then, which is clearly influenced by the newly emerging Hellenistic spirit and where previous more impersonal ways of thinking were becoming imbued with a new sense of individuality.

It seems that the sense of individuality that was becoming intrinsic to the Hellenistic worldview influenced at least some Jewish thinking. Looking back at Jewish tradition to this point, however, it is important to understand the relative importance of both the individual and the community in Jewish thought.

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[20] M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 115f.

[21] M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 116; R.T. Gordis, *Koheleth—The Man and his World* (Texts and Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, 1951), 75. Gordis refers to Koheleth as "intensely personal".

[22] Koheleth 2:24; 3:22; 4:18; 8:15; 11:9.

[23] Koheleth 4:18.

[24] R. Kroeber, *Der Prediger* (Schriften und Quellen der Alten Welt 13, Berlin, 1963), 26.

[25] J. Hempel, *Die althebräische Literatur und ihr hellenistichjüdisches Nachleben* (Wildpark-Potsdam, 1930), 191.

Individualist and Corporate Elements in Jewish Tradition

The question of how much Israelite religion was based on the community and how much it focused on the religious life of the individual is one which has exercised Old Testament scholarship over a long period of time. As early as 1911, H.W. Robinson used the term "corporate personality" to describe the lack of sense of the individual within Israelite society.[26] Robinson suggested that the limits of an individual's personality were not clearly defined in ancient Israel and that because of that a member of a group could be held responsible for the action of that group. Robinson relied heavily on the anthropology of Durkheim[27] and Levy-Bruhl who asserted that primitive peoples' mind-set is very different from that of the modern human, whereby there is an inability of individuals to separate themselves from other members of their group or symbols of their group.

Although Robinson's ideas about corporate personality were utilised for several decades quite freely by other Old Testament scholars,[28] they were eventually quite decisively criticised, largely because they were based on what is now reckoned to be fallacious anthropological arguments.[29] In particular, Porter considered the legal aspects of corporate personality and rejected the idea that legally whatever the individual did in ancient Israel was considered as being done by the whole group.[30] Rogerson went further in his criticisms and dismissed the whole idea as being ill-defined, ambiguous and confusing.[31]

Recently, however, in a consideration of Porter's criticism of Robinson, Kaminsky has shown that when Porter analysed certain

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[26] H.W. Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, rev. edn, 1981). This article was first published in P. Volz, F. Stummer and J. Hempel (eds), *Werden und Wesen des Alten Testaments: Vortrage gehalten auf der Internationalen Tagung alttestamentlicher Forscher zu Gottingen vom 4–10, September 1935* (BZAW, 66; Berlin, Töpelmann, 1936).

[27] E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. J Swain (New York, The Free Press, 1915).

[28] For example, A.R. Johnson, *The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press Board, 2nd edn, 1961).

[29] R.E. Clements, "Israel in its Historical and Cultural Setting", in R.E. Clements (ed.), *The World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge, CUP, 1989), 3–36.

[30] J.R. Porter, 'The Legal Aspects of the Concept of "Corporate Personality" in the Old Testament', *Vetus Testamentum* 15 (1965), 361–380.

[31] J.W. Rogerson, "The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality: A Re-Examination", *Journal of Theological Studies* 21 (April 1970), 1–16.

Old Testament cases that involved corporate elements, he tended to characterise these as primitive and pertaining only to the religious sphere, and thus not so equitable as more individualised legal cases. Kaminsky views this as stemming from a modern Enlightenment bias that holds to an evolutionary view of the history of civilisation, one which views older corporate notions as being inferior to modern individualism. He notes the tendency in Old Testament scholarship to devalue corporate notions and to work within an over simplified evolutionary framework where there is a progression from corporatism to individualism within Israelite religion. This, suggests Kaminsky, creates an inaccurate portrait which does no justice to the evidence of the Old Testament.[32]

Kaminsky admits that Robinson's "romantic reading of Israelite religion" is seriously flawed, but believes that there is much value in his insight into the existence of corporate ways of thinking in ancient Israel.[33]

He goes on to present extensive evidence that corporate ideas remained integral to Israelite thought. He highlights, for example, the prevalence and continuity of such ideas in the Deuteronomic history, both in its original form and its pre-exilic redaction. Given the covenantal theology which underpins the Deuteronomic history, which is essentially a corporate matter, in that it deals with God's relationship to the nation as a whole, Kaminsky finds it unsurprising that corporate notions such as trans-generational punishment should be so central.[34] The idea of transference of punishment across generations which we have in Exod. 20:5 is happily utilised by the Deuteronomic historian in 1 Kings 21:29 and 2 Kings 20:16–18.

Notwithstanding the strong corporate notions which he finds in the Hebrew bible, Kaminsky finds other streams of Israelite tradition which focused to a much greater extent on the individual. In an examination of the Deuteronomic literature, he finds texts which contain evidence of a deeper appreciation of the individual and his or her importance to God.[35] These include, importantly, Deut. 24:16,

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[32] J.S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1995), 22.
[33] J.S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility*, 22.
[34] J.S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility*, 30–54.
[35] J.S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility*, 116–137.

> Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents: only for their own crimes may persons be put to death,

which indicates a new concern to limit punishment solely to the guilty party; and also Deut. 29:15–20, where in Moses' address to the gathered Israelites, it is admitted that,

> It may be that there is among you a man or a woman . . . whose heart is already turning away from the Lord our God to serve the gods of those nations,

with an obvious emphasis on the responsibility of the individual Israelite to respond properly to Yahweh.

Although this may be an attempt to qualify older corporate ideas, it must not be misconstrued as rejection of these corporate ideas, and Kaminsky emphasises that texts from the later biblical period and into the first century CE continue to highlight the importance of the community.[36]

In an extensive consideration of Jeremiah 31:29–30 and Ezekiel 18, which are often seen as indicating a radical and innovative turning point in Israel's theological understanding of the individual's relationship to God,[37] Kaminsky presents convincing evidence that it is unlikely these texts were written as systematic statements of theology specifically produced to reject older corporate ideas, given the strong corporate emphases throughout the rest of Ezekiel and Jeremiah.[38] He points to the themes of corporate restoration, for example, in chs. 30–31 of Jeremiah—in 30:4; 31:1, the Lord addresses the "families of Israel"; in 31:31–34, he promises to "make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah"—and in Ezek. 9:5–6; 20:23–26; 21:8–9; 24:21, where the prophet asserts that sometimes the innocent suffer as well as the guilty within the community. Kaminsky's main point is that these passages do not necessarily denote a major change in thinking from corporate to individual

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[36] Dan. 6:25; Est. 9:7–10; Matt. 23:29–36; Lev.R. 46; b.Sanh. 43b–44a; T.d.Eiyy. 12.

[37] E.g. H. Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, transl. D.E. Green (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1966), 286; G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, transl. D.M.G. Stalker (New York, Harper & Row, 1965), 266, comments that, in Ezekiel, "each individual stands in direct relationship to God, and JHWH has the keenest interest in the individual . . . Ezekiel abandoned the old collective way of thinking . . . Jeremiah too used what was a radically individualistic way of thinking."

[38] J.S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility*, 139–178.

emphasis in Jewish thinking, rather than denying that they do, in fact, indicate a concern with individual responsibility toward God. There can be little doubt that the language of these passages is decidedly individualistic and indicates at the very least a train of thought in the Old Testament which is concerned with the individual's relationship to God.

Kaminsky, then, does not deny there is in the Hebrew bible a movement towards greater recognition of the individual in relation to God, but suggests that it is always the case that the "individual's very self-understanding was derived from his or her relationship to the community". It is the individual as a member of the community where the emphasis lies, not the individual as an "autonomous entity before God."[39]

This is not to deny, however, that individual ideas exist within the Hebrew bible;[40] they do so, however, not as a progression from older corporate ideas, but alongside them as complementary.[41] Whereas Old Testament scholarship in the past has viewed pre-exilic Israelite religion as based on solidarity rather than individualism, the trend now is to take a more balanced view. "The untenability of the older view that 'individualism emerged' in the seventh century or later is but one example of the inadequacy of neat patterns for describing the development of Israel's religion".[42] Scholars such as Joyce have recently found developments in the Hebrew bible both in the direction of collective emphasises and in the direction of individual responsibility.[43] Both it seems are important, but individualism only in so far as it is closely related to community life.

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[39] J.S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility*, 153.

[40] W. Eichrodt, *Das Menschenverständnis im Alten Testament*, transl. K. & R. Gregor Smith (London, SCM, 1951). Eichrodt stresses the importance of individual responsibility in Israel's early lawcodes, as well as other corporate ideas; T.C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1958).

[41] W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, transl. J.A. Baker (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1967), II, 232, comments, "In interplay with this solidarity thinking we find a living individuality which, as distinct from individualism, is to be understood as the capacity for personal responsibility and for shaping one's life. This does not stand in mutually exclusive opposition to, but in fruitful tension with, the duty of solidarity, and as such affects the individual and motivates his conduct."

[42] G.W. Anderson, *The Old Testament and Modern Study*, ed. H.H. Rowley (Oxford, OUP, 1956), 309.

[43] P. Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel*, (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1989), 85.

The Hebrew scriptures, then, should not be seen as either to ignore the importance of the individual, or to contain a pattern of progression from corporatism to individualism. There is, in fact, a more nuanced theology of individual and community, whereby an individual's actions and relationship to God is important, but only in so far as they are part of a larger narrative framework of the community as a whole.

Nevertheless, in the post-exilic period, there does seem to be an increased sense of the importance of individual piety.[44] This is seen, for example, in the change and attitude to the afterlife. Previously there had been little sense of afterlife[45] and death was the end of an individual. A person's life only had meaning as part of the whole community. After the second century BCE, however, the notion of immortality became important, indicating the increased sense of the importance of the individual.[46] We find the first mention in the Old Testament of individuals going beyond death to either bliss or to torment in Daniel 12:

> Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.[47]

This was a vital development, as the sense of an afterlife serves to focus a person's attention much more on himself as an individual, as opposed to simply as a member of the community. Now the individual is important enough to live beyond death; now the individual will undertake an activity (death) completely alone; and now the individual's own, personal actions begin to take on much more significance as potentially something that might affect his afterlife. As Bousset and Gressman have noted, "Only in the notion of other-worldly retribution does religious individualism find its firm stay and its terse

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[44] S.J.D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1987), 75.

[45] Sheol is the pre-exilic afterlife destination of everyone, whether wicked or righteous and no judgement or rewards existed. It is not until the third and second centuries BCE that notions about immortality and resurrection begin to arise. See e.g. S.J.D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 91.

[46] J.H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament* (Cambridge, CUP, 1985, 1989), 68, notes that "The individual's destiny was gradually explained by more and more Jews in terms of belief in the resurrection of the body after death . . . It is found in many types of literature, notably in 2 Maccabees, the Psalms of Solomon and the . . . Eighteen Benedictions".

[47] Daniel 12:2.

summation".[48] The result was to increase the tendency towards individual piety.

Davies notes the deepened awareness of "specifically personal religious experience"[49] in second Temple Judaism, where an individual's own experience of God became important, and not just the nation as a whole. We have mentioned already the passages in Ezekiel and Jeremiah that focus on the individual's relationship with God (though noting that they do not herald an end to corporate ideas), and further examples of this outlook occur throughout the intertestamental period. Ben Sira, for example, takes up Ezekiel's theme of individual free will and argues that a sinner cannot evade responsibility for his actions:

> Do not say, "It was the Lord's doing that I fell away"; for he does not do what he hates . . . Do not say, "I am hidden from the Lord, and who from on high has me in mind?[50]

Ben Sira negates arguments that everything is determined by God and that human beings do not have free will, and that God is uninterested in an individual's actions, so powerful is he and so insignificant are we. Everyone is responsible for his or her own deeds. Ben Sira therefore counselled repentance, as does the prayer of Manasseh, which indicates a strong sense of personal guilt and sense of responsibility, and is an excellent (and touching) expression of a very personal piety:

> you are the Lord Most High, of great compassion, long-suffering and very merciful . . .
> you have promised repentance and forgiveness to those who have sinned against you . . .
> you have appointed repentance for me, who am a sinner.
> For the sins I have committed are more in number than the sand of the sea . . .
> I am weighted down with many an iron fetter, so I am rejected because of my sins . . .
> And now I bend the knee of my heart, imploring you for forgiveness . . .
> I earnestly implore you, forgive me, O Lord, forgive me[51]

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[48] W. Bousset & H. Gressman, *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter*, HNT (Tübingen, 1926, 1966), 291, transl. M. Hengel, *Judaism & Hellenism*, 202.
[49] W.D. Davies, *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1991), 52.
[50] Sirach, 15:11–12; 16:17.
[51] Prayer of Manasseh, 7–13.

Cohen shows how in the post-exilic period, development of the synagogues, of prayer and of Torah study meant that the Temple cult was no longer the only means of religious observance, and effectively aided "the transfer of sanctity from the temple to areas outside of it, from the priests to the laity, and from the temple cult to actions of daily life". This he refers to as the "democratization of religion".[52] The growth of synagogue worship brought something of a religious revolution in certain respects, where a form of worship was created that was not concerned with sacrifices. The focus on prayer and study of the scriptures with no need for priests effectively paved the way for a more interior sort of religion. Sanders suggests that Judaism in the first century CE had become quite apart from Graeco-Roman paganism in that Jewish Law had been internalised and individualised to quite some degree in the lives of ordinary Jewish people.

Personal piety, then, for most Jews, became a matter of great importance. Judaism was seen to effect all of life—it was not just a cult,[53] nor was it a theology.[54] It was rather a "philosophy",[55] a distinctive way of life, which included worship of God, circumcision, purity, Sabbath and social ethics.[56]

Personal piety did doubtless involve a personal emotional devotion to God,[57] individual conviction of sin at time of sacrifice,[58] appropriate feelings of thankfulness or forgiveness during the practise of the cult,[59] and the experience of personal prayer.[60] In addition, it is to be noted that repentance for sin on a personal level became increasingly important in the literature of the period, with reward and punishment playing an important role.[61] Also, Segal draws attention to the proseletizing nature of first century Judaism and that conversion in the ancient world involved an emotional response on the

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[52] S.J.D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 75.

[53] E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 50.

[54] E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 191; S.J.D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 60f.

[55] E.g. *War* 2.119; Philo, *Creation of the World*, 28.

[56] E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, chs. 11 & 12.

[57] E. Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Times of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, reprint 1910), 487. He notes that Jewish "rites and observances" were "animated . . . by inward spirituality".

[58] E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 108.

[59] E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 116.

[60] E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 203; S.J.D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 66.

[61] E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 270f.

part of an individual.[62] None of this, however, should give the impression of Judaism as primarily a religion of personalised, psychological, inner, experience. The personal piety of Judaism was essentially worked out at a practical level. It was very much based on praxis as opposed to theology, and the love of God and love of neighbour were absolutely inseparable.[63] Nevertheless, individual responsibility and a sense personal involvement were important elements for many in the Judaism of the period.

Personal piety, then, was increasingly seen as an individual matter, but to take a balanced view, it must be seen in the context of individuals already having a sense of being a part of the people of God (whether that was in a sectarian sense or not). The progress of individualism and a more interior worship were neither opposed to nor incompatible with the corporate nature of Judaism. There was a sense of reward and punishment based on personal action, but salvation was both a matter for the individual and the community of the people of God. One would participate in the salvation which God had prepared for his people by living as part of the covenant people (Sanders' "staying in" concept). Only by intentionally and deliberately sinning and refusing to repent could one become apostate and put oneself outside the covenant and therefore outside of salvation.[64] The personal piety, we have noted, then, must be seen in the context of individuals seeking to live within the covenant, and in such a context, salvation was typically seen as concerning the nation (or the sectarian group within the nation), something in which an individual would participate, assuming he kept within covenantal boundaries.[65] We see, then, within Judaism the importance of individual responsibility and active participation in the covenant relationship with God; this indicates clearly for us the interdependence of both the individual and the community. The individual was not subsumed within the larger group, but neither was he an autonomous agent. There was a much more balanced sense of both individual and community.

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[62] A.F. Segal, *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge MA and London, Harvard University Press, 1986), 99.

[63] E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 260.

[64] E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 275.

[65] N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 334–38.

The Qumran Community

Of particular note for us in this discussion of collectivism and individualism within Judaism is the sectarian community of Qumran and the wider Essene movement, which of course was existent during the first half of the first century CE. The Qumran community represents a group which physically withdrew from society and organised itself very strictly as a quasi-monastic community, with high demands for conformity amongst its members. The identity, the cohesion, the needs, the norms and the future of the collective were all to the fore in this group which viewed itself as the remnant, the true Israel, the true elect. At first glance, the individual would not seem to have much of a rôle or importance in such a sectarian group.

Vermes, however, points out that the covenant ideology that underpinned the Essene movement had developed into something that very importantly demanded a personal response by every individual Jew.[66] He suggests that Isaiah 54:13 and Jeremiah 33:1–3 are indicative of the development of a sense of the covenant that did not depend on the undertakings of the community, but on the "inner transformation of every individual Jew for whom the will of God was to become, as it were, second nature". The continual failing of Israel to be faithful to the covenant demands, as demonstrated comprehensively and finally in the events of the exile, gave rise to a "remnant" theology that suggested the covenant endured through those individuals who, despite the rebellion of the nation as a whole, remained faithful to Yahweh. The Qumran community, then, felt itself to be such a remnant—and, in fact, to be the final remnant. This accounted for the group's extremely sectarian stance within Judaism: "God has chosen them to His chosen Ones, And has caused them to inherit, The lot of the Holy Ones".[67]

But such a "remnant" demanded that individuals make their own particular response to the group. Previously, membership of the people of God was by birth and by the rite of circumcision for eight-day-old males. Every Jew was thus a member of the elect. Now membership of the new people of God was "by virtue of the deliberate

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[66] G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London, Penguin, 1997, 1998), 68.

[67] 1QS 9.7.

and personal . . . commitment of himself".[68] A person had to decide for himself that he would join himself to the movement, and having done so, go through an elaborate initiation and probation process.[69] Such a person, furthermore, had to be an adult, and children born to married members of the community, who went to community schools, were not considered full community members, but had to wait until their twentieth birthday, before being allowed to enter the Covenant.[70] The movement depended, then, upon the individual and personal choice of the member, who had to be prepared to submit to the norms and expectations of the group.[71] In this way, then, we see the interplay between the individual and the collective, individual choice, decision and commitment playing an important rôle in the initiation and continued participation in the group, but group norms and values becoming of paramount importance for the fully-fledged member.

Once a part of the community, however, there was a strong sense of personal devotion and relationship to God. In some ways this is inevitable, given the personal choice and difficulty involved[72] in joining such an exclusive group which saw itself as *the* expression of the people of God. Members were to "seek God with a whole heart and soul",[73] and to devote themselves to "the observance of God's precepts".[74] There is a clear sense in The Community Rule of the personal religious experience of the individual member. We read of "the enlightenment of the heart"; of God's laws being "instilled in his heart"; of a trust in God and "leaning on his great loving-kindness"; of "holy intent and purpose"; and "an understanding of all things, and of faithful concealment of the mysteries of truth".[75] An individual, however, must contend with a fierce inner struggle between the two spirits of Light and Darkness, and must seek to walk in the spirit of Light:

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[68] G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 73.
[69] 1QS 5; 8; 9; 4QS 1–7.
[70] 1QSa 1.6–9.
[71] 1QS 1.11: "All those who freely devote themselves to His truth shall bring all their knowledge, powers and possessions into the Community of God".
[72] Initiation involved one year of probation, two years of further training and the swearing of an oath of loyalty to the sect.
[73] 1QS 1.1–2.
[74] 1QS 1.6–7.
[75] 1QS 4.4–8.

> the nature of all the children of men is ruled by these (two spirits) . . . and their struggle is fierce . . . until now the spirits of truth and injustice struggle in the hearts of men and they walk in both wisdom and folly.[76]

We have here, then, a recognition of the individual's ability and need to choose between good and evil, and also of the personal struggle which each person has in order to live in what he considers to be the right way.

Those who follow the "spirit of Light" will enjoy for themselves "great peace in a long life" and then "everlasting blessing and eternal joy in life without end".[77] These promised blessings for the faithful, especially the sense of blessing in an afterlife,[78] indicate, as we have discussed previously, the personal and individualistic importance of religion with this sort of belief.

The Qumran hymns, too, testify to personal piety.[79] We see, for example, the sense of personal unworthiness and utter dependence upon God:

> Clay and dust that I am,
> what can I devise unless Thou wish it,
> and what contrive unless Thou desire it?
> What strength shall I have
> Unless Thou keep me upright
> and how shall I understand
> unless by (the spirit) which Thou hast shaped for me?[80]

In addition, the Psalms show us touching expressions of love of the individual for God—"I have loved Thee freely and with all my heart and soul"[81]—and thanksgiving for God's forgiveness of sin—"[Thou hast not] judged me according to my guilt"; rather, "[Thou hast] called me to thy grace and to [Thy] forgiveness thou hast brought me".[82]

Finally, it is worth noting, with Vermes, that:

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[76] 1QS 4.15–25.

[77] 1QS 4.9.

[78] Vermes notes that the Community rejected the notion of bodily resurrection, envisaging a purely spiritual afterlife: G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 47.

[79] S.J.D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 95, comments that the Qumran hymns "are dominated . . . by the sense of gratitude that the penitent feels toward God".

[80] 1QH 18.5–7.

[81] 1QH 7.10.

[82] 1QH 13.6; 1QH 15.35.

> The aim of a holy life lived within the Covenant was to penetrate the secrets of heaven in this world and to stand before God for ever in the next . . . the Essenes, too, strove for . . . mystical knowledge.[83]

Such mystical aspirations are sure signs of deep personal involvement in the religion of the movement, and indicative, that even within a strongly community-oriented movement, individualistic religious experience was still evident. We see evidence, then, in the Qumran community of the balance between the community and the individual in their common life and religious experience.

Conclusions

In this chapter we have noted the effect of Hellenistic language and culture on the world view and thought of Judaism, as well as the growing importance of the individual noted by a number of writers, and the way in which the sense of individuality that was becoming intrinsic to the Hellenistic world view influenced at least some Jewish thinking of the period.

A consideration of Jewish tradition highlighted the way in which scholars have often felt they could demonstrate a progression from corporatism to individualism within Israelite religion. We considered Kaminsky's view, however, that we should reckon on both emphases being important in the Hebrew bible and it is likely that a more nuanced theology of individual and community existed. It was noted, importantly, that the individual was typically important in Jewish tradition largely in the context of the community.

Nevertheless, in the post-exilic period, there does seem to be an increased sense of the importance of the individual in Judaism, with personal piety, more interior forms of worship and an internalised Jewish Law important factors in the lives of ordinary Jewish people. The progress of such individualism was, however, still within the bounds of a largely community-oriented Judaism.

A brief consideration was given to the strongly community-oriented group at Qumran and evidence found that individual decision-making

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[83] G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 76. In support, Vermes quotes 4Q405 20, ii–22, which is a description of one individual's visions of the ministers of the "Glorious Face".

and personal relationship to God were important, along with community obligations.

The evidence from the Old Testament scholars and scholars of the Judaism of the Hellenistic period, along with the literature of the period we have reviewed, then, suggests that there was a definite sense of individual responsibility inherent in Israel's traditions, and that, along with a strong sense of community identity, as we move into the world of the New Testament, personal religious experience, personal piety and a concern with individual salvation are all detectable.

CONCLUSION TO PART I

Our study thus far gives us reasonable grounds on which to embark on a study of Pauline texts to investigate the importance of the individual in the apostle's thinking.

- Our review of the anthropological and sociological research with respect to the nature of the individual self suggests that there is good reason to be sceptical of sociological approaches which subjugate the self to the determining power of the social, and that a fully reflexively-aware and creative self should be found in all societies, including those that might be considered to be less developed than our own.
- The review of classical scholarship's discussion of the nature of the self in ancient Greece suggests that there is good reason not to characterise people from this period as lacking in individuality; indeed, that there is good reason to recognise individuality and self-motivated behaviour. Furthermore, even if we were to characterise the classical world as a "shame culture", there is no need to deny that the values associated with this, which of necessity take into consideration the community, work primarily at an individual level.
- Classical scholars have questioned the persistence of a shame culture into the Hellenistic period, and the highly collective nature of the 1st century self proposed by Malina on the basis of a supposed shame culture lacks both the support of many classical scholars and recent social anthropology.
- A consideration of the nature of collectivism and individualism in society indicated that the 1st century world with which we are concerned should probably be characterised as collective; anthropological research, however, cautions us against denying the existence of individualistic behaviour in such societies, and a brief review of the socio-historical situation of the Graeco-Roman world suggested that there was a growing sense of the importance of the individual, albeit in a society that was still much more collective than our own.
- A consideration of the development of religion before and during

the Hellenistic period indicated that it is likely that the individual and individual soteriology was becoming increasingly important.

- Finally, a review of some recent scholarship of both the Old Testament and Hellenistic Judaism gives us good reason to suppose that Judaism had a rich heritage of emphasis on the individual and his responsibility to God, alongside a fundamental focus on the community. Along with opinion that suggests an increased level of personal piety and internalisation of Judaism in the period, it does not seem unwise to suggest that there was nothing in Paul's Jewish background that would militate against an interest in the individual.

Our research, then, gives us good reason to suppose that people in the cities of the first century Mediterranean world of the apostle Paul were not wholly determined by their culture or the groups of which they were a part; on the contrary were fully self-conscious, self-reflective individuals capable of self-motivated behaviour; lived in a world in which such behaviour was on the increase and where there was a growing intellectual recognition of the importance of the individual, as evidenced in the philosophy and religions that were developing; and were increasingly concerned with individual salvation. The group of which Paul himself was a part was, as we have seen, influenced by Hellenism, not least by its growing individualism and in any case, Judaism had a heritage of recognising the importance of the individual. It seems reasonable, then, to suppose that Paul might have had an interest in how the individual features in the purposes of God, as opposed to merely people groups, and that he might have been concerned with how the gospel relates to the personal salvation of the individual.

The investigation of this is the major element of this study, and to that we now turn, with an analysis of certain texts in Paul's letter to the Romans.

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PART TWO

SELECTED TEXTS IN ROMANS 1–8: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN PAULINE THOUGHT

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CHAPTER SIX

THE STRESS ON THE COLLECTIVE IN RECENT RESEARCH ON ROMANS

Introduction

Romans is all about God doing what is right for the whole world in Jesus Christ, and focuses on the One God who is the God of all people. Paul's focus is on the God of both Jews and Gentiles, both of whom stand similarly condemned before him, and are similarly justified through faith in Jesus Christ.[1]

Dunn characterises Paul's objectives in writing Romans as being missionary and pastoral, as well as apologetic.[2] To be sure Paul sets out a very full statement of his understanding of the gospel in Romans, presumably with a view to gaining acceptance in a very influential church in what was the capital of the Empire, but he also wanted to establish a base of support for the next phase of his missionary activity, and also to help counter potential divisions between Gentile and Jewish believers.[3]

In any case, Paul's apologetic and theological purpose is quite coherent with his missionary purpose and his pastoral concerns in writing the letter. It was his theological conviction that the purposes of God for both Jew and Gentile were eschatologically fulfilled in the Messiah, Jesus, and it was this that provided the impetus for his missionary activity. In addition, it was this conviction that answered the proposed tensions that were arising between Jew and Gentile within the church at Rome, pointing to equality of standing before God for both groups outside of Christ, and also as redeemed people in Christ.

In Romans, Paul presents God as the author of a divine plan of salvation (8:28; 9:11), which has as its concern the outworking of human history and the deliverance of God's people, which now include Gentiles as well as the previously elected Israel. Paul explains

[1] D.L. Bartlett, *Romans* (Louisville, John Knox, 1995), 3.
[2] J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, lvff.
[3] See J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, lv–lviii for details on the missionary, apologetic and pastoral purposes underlying the letter, with full references.

his understanding of the gospel by reference to this plan of salvation and its sacred history, exploring the phases of human history from a Jewish perspective, from Adam to Moses to Messiah to illustrate the theme of justification through faith which brings about the salvation of both Jew and Gentile.[4]

The Stress on the Collective in Romans

Introduction

Stendahl has recently characterised Paul's letter to the Romans as the "final account of his theology of mission".[5] As has been the consensus in most of the recent scholarship on Romans, Stendahl denies that Romans is an abstract theological exposition of the doctrine of justification by faith. Neither should it be seen as a pastoral letter dealing with specific problems in quite the same way as Paul's other letters. Rather, for Stendahl, Romans is all about how the mission to the Gentiles is integral to the overall mission of God to the world which includes the restoration of creation and the redemption of Israel. Paul's concern here is not with individual guilt, forgiveness and salvation (Luther's "How can I find a gracious God" question), but rather with the grander theme of "God's plan for the world and . . . how Paul's mission to the Gentiles fits into that plan".[6]

Whether or not Stendahl has it exactly right or not, in shifting the focus of Romans away from individual matters of conscience, guilt, and individual salvation towards the more collectively-oriented question of who are the people who participate in God's purposes, he has much in common with the mainstream of recent scholarship. A look at most of the major works on Paul and Romans over recent years reveals a strong consensus amongst scholars that Paul's main concern was for matters corporate, as opposed to individual. The issue of the relationship between an individual and God which past exegetes like Luther, Calvin or Bultmann have found in Romans has been largely superseded by a consensus that, in Romans, Paul

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[4] J.A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (New York, Doubleday, 1992), 104–10, refers to this presentation as a "remarkable summary of some Pauline teachings" (103).

[5] K. Stendahl, *Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1995), ix.

[6] K. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews & Gentiles* (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1976), 27.

was exploring the question that was of such vital importance for the early Christian movement—that of the collective identity of the people of God within the unfolding of God's purposes. With few exceptions over the past twenty years,[7] recent scholarship has moved away from seeing Romans as a systematic outline of Pauline theology,[8] primarily concerned with explaining how the individual gains salvation and maintains his or her relationship with God.

This, of course, is in stark contrast to earlier commentators who followed Luther in seeing in Romans essentially an exposition of the plight of human beings (caught in sin and unable to help themselves through their own efforts) and the means of salvation for an individual (justification through faith).[9] Commenting on Rom. 1:16, on the gospel as the power of God to παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Käsemann, for example, refers to salvation as a person's experience of peace and joy before God and assurance of future deliverance, and says that "the reference to "every" believer shows that the interpretation by

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[7] One notable exception is M.A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme* (Leiden, Brill, 1992). Seifrid admits that Paul's intent in Romans was to warn Gentiles of the danger of pride and thus to promote unity, and to win a welcome for Paul and his mission, but does not see this as Paul's primary aim. Rather Paul was presenting a theological explication and defence of his gospel to a group which Paul considered to be within his sphere of apostolic responsibility.

[8] Philipp Melanchton, "Römerbrief-Kommentar, 1532," in *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl* 5, ed. R. Stupperich, 7 vols. (Gütersloh, Mohn, 1951–1975). Since Melanchthon's characterisation of Romans as the "compendium doctrinae Christianae", this has been the prevailing view of the letter. Typical of previous scholarship are the views of G. Klein and G. Bornkamm who maintain that Paul sets out his gospel in Romans in a universally valid way. G. Klein, "Paul's Purpose in Writing the Epistle to the Romans", in K.P. Donfried (ed.) *The Romans Debate* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1977), 49; G. Bornkamm, "The Letter to the Romans as Paul's Last Will and Testament", in K.P. Donfried, *The Romans Debate*, 17–31. Other prominent scholars taking this view include F.F. Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1977), 325–26; C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1975), 816–17; B. Noack, "Current and Backwater in the Epistle to the Romans," *Studia Theologia* 19 (1965), 155–66, 161 says, "Paul really does write to the Romans . . . as if they needed a theological treatise". These all reflect the view of Lightfoot, that Paul wrote Romans "at leisure, under no pressure of circumstances, in the face of no direct antagonism" in a way that was "generalised and arranged so as to form a comprehensive and systematic treatise". J.B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London, Macmillan, 1865), 49.

[9] Typical of a very individualistic, personal interpretation of Romans are commentaries by K. Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 6th ed., trans. E.C. Hoskyns (London, Oxford, 1963); A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*; E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. G.W. Bromiley (London, SCM, 1980).

early history-of-religions research that Paul never has the individual in mind is wrong. Universalism and *the most radical individuation* are here two sides of the same coin"[10] (my italics).

Recent Assumptions Regarding the Background to Romans

The stress on matters collective, as opposed to individual, has largely developed out of a willingness to grapple with the practical reasons for Paul writing to the church at Rome. These reasons include both Paul's own circumstances and ministry[11] and the concrete situation in which the church at Rome found itself.[12]

A number of writers have highlighted Paul's personal reasons for writing to the Romans—to enlist their support for Paul's proposed mission to Spain (Rom. 15:24)[13] and to gain their prayers for his forthcoming visit to Jerusalem where his welcome was less than assured[14] (Rom. 15:30, 31). Furthermore, Paul's sense of being the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 1:5/15:16) has also been emphasised,[15] which led him to a feeling of responsibility for the Roman church, and the desire to include them in his priestly offering of the Gentiles to God (15:16).[16]

With regard to the situation in Rome to which Paul addressed his letter, there is a growing consensus that Paul wrote to address developing tensions between Gentile and Jewish believers within the

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[10] E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 22.

[11] J. Jervell, "The Letter to Jerusalem", in K.P. Donfried, *The Romans Debate*, 62. Jervell writes, "the letter itself clearly states that its raison d'être does not stem from the situation of the Roman congregation, but is to be found in Paul himself at the time of writing".

[12] J.C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1980), 71: "The motivation of the letter lies in Paul's concrete situation and in that of the Roman church . . . there is a convergence of several factors behind the occasion for the letter, which explains its occasional yet 'systematic' form".

[13] J.A. Crafton, "Paul's Rhetorical Vision and the Purpose of Romans: Towards a New Understanding", *Novum Testamentum* 32 (1990), 327; W.G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, transl. H.C. Kee, rev. edn. (Nashville, Abingdon, 1975), 309f.

[14] J. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1980), 72; P.S. Minear, *The Obedience of Faith: The Purposes of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans* (London, SCM, 1971), 3–8.

[15] D.J.-S. Chae, *Paul as Apostle to the Gentiles: His Apostolic Self-Awareness and its Influence on the Soteriological Argument in Romans* (Carlisle, Paternoster, 1997), 18–71, sees Paul's apostleship to the Gentiles as the interpretive key for the letter: this was the reason for his Gentile-inclusive soteriology which, according to Chae, is boldly argued in Romans.

[16] D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 889, "The Roman church, a mainly Gentile church . . . lies within the scope of Paul's apostolic authority".

church.[17] That such tensions existed is suggested directly by the text in a number of passages—Paul's defence of the Law in ch. 7; his defence of the place of Israel within God's purpose in chs. 9–11; his appeal to the "strong" (presumed by most to be Gentile Christians) not to pass judgement on the "weak" (presumed to be Jewish believers); and his direct appeal to Gentile members of the church not to be arrogant with respect to the Jews (11:18). All these suggest a situation where there is a Gentile majority within the Roman church, with the danger of it developing a superior attitude towards the Jewish minority, resulting in tension and problems between the two groups. The construction of such a social background to Romans from this textual evidence has been given considerable support by the Claudius expulsion theory, which has gained wide acceptance in recent years.

Kümmel's standard treatment of this claims that a remark by Suetonius (ca. 120 CE) in his Life of Claudius—"Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome since they had been continually causing disturbances at the instigation of a certain Chrestus"—refers to the disputes within the Jewish community in Rome during the reign of Claudius due to claims about Jesus Christ by some Jewish Christians.[18] On the basis of this source, along with Acts 18:2, which states that "Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome", the Claudius theory suggests that the Roman Jews, including Jewish Christians, were expelled from Rome in 49 CE, thus leaving the Christian house-churches to develop as an entirely Gentile phenomenon until the Jews returned after the death of Claudius in 54 CE. Building on this basis, then, the further speculation is that the returning Christian Jews found a church that had developed its own non-Jewish practice of Christianity and leadership, and harmonious integration between the two groups proved difficult. Such a construction of the situation in the church at Rome, then, makes the interpretation of Paul's letter as an attempt to curb Gentile superiority and to ease tensions between the two groups entirely plausible.[19]

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[17] This is assumed by most of the recent major commentaries; also see H. Preisker, "Das historische Problem des Römerbriefes," *Wissenschaft Zeitschrift der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena* 2 (1952–53), 25–30; H.W. Barsch, "Paulus und die Juden. Zur Auslegung des Römerbriefes," *Kirche in der Zeit* 20 (1965), 210f.

[18] W.G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 307–309.

[19] See e.g. J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, xlviiff.; J.C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 69–74; W. Marxsen, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1968), 95–104.

Once such Jew-Gentile tensions are pre-supposed, it is not hard to read Romans as primarily concerning the question of Jew and Gentile within the people of God. The fledgling Christian church had struggled from the outset with the issue of how Jew and Gentile could be integrated in what was primarily a Jewish development, and Paul, since his meeting with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, had been convinced that being a part of ethnic Israel was not necessary for sharing in the people of God. Paul's continual struggle with this issue is evidenced by his caution over his proposed visit to Jerusalem with his collection (Rom. 15:30, 31). He saw his apostleship clearly to be directed towards producing the ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (Rom. 1:5). In a letter where he seeks to set out his understanding of the gospel of Christ, his outlook on this major issue would be expected to be prominent. Writing to a mainly Gentile audience in the Roman church (but nevertheless one which has had exposure to Judaism and the Hebrew scriptures),[20] Paul outlines the terms in which both Jews and Gentiles participate in God's purposes, which are found to be the same—faith in Christ. He is careful to highlight again his Torah-free gospel which allows Gentiles to be as much a part of God's purposes as Jews. But—and here we see how the letter is rooted in the concrete social situation of Rome—Paul does not want to encourage Gentile superiority (Rom. 11:17f), and so is concerned to root his understanding of God's purposes and salvation in the Hebrew scriptures and to highlight the fundamental status of Israel as the place of origin of God's plan of salvation. The concern of Paul's own lifetime ministry over the place of the Gentiles, then, and the assumed tensions within the Roman church give rise to the presentation of Paul's gospel in Romans, which it can be argued, is thus primarily aimed at addressing more corporate issues rather than individual soteriology.

Recent Approaches to Romans Stress the Collective

This is very much the emphasis in most of the major scholarship on Romans in recent years. Most writers presuppose the return of Jews to Rome after the exile resulting from the edict of Claudius as the social backdrop to the letter to Rome; some, in addition, posit

[20] N.T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul", in D.M. Hays & E.E. Johnson (eds.), *Pauline Theology Vol. III: Romans* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1995), 34.

more carefully re-constructed sociologies of the Roman church in their interpretations; almost universal is the assumption of serious Jew-Gentile tensions within the church. When this is added to a covenantal understanding of Pauline thought, whereby his concern was for working out how the One God's covenant with Israel could now embrace all peoples, Gentiles as well as Jews, through his faithful actions in the person of Jesus Christ, then the focus in reading Romans moves distinctly towards the issue of the relationship of people groups and corporate identity. We can detect, then, in recent discussion of Romans three distinct approaches, all of which serve to highlight the corporate issue of the relation between Jews and Gentiles. Firstly, approaches which focus on a covenantal reading of the letter, stressing the continuity between Pauline thought and theology and the Jewish covenant; secondly, approaches which stress the cosmic nature of God's purposes which encompass all peoples; and thirdly approaches with a distinctly sociological flavour, which seek to understand what Paul is saying primarily against the supposed background of the Christian community at Rome.

Prominent amongst those who advocate a covenantal reading of Romans has been Wright. For him, Romans is Paul's explanation of the gospel in terms of the divine covenant, and how it extends, starting from Israel, to the whole world, through the covenant faithfulness of Israel's Messiah, Jesus.[21] Wright strives for a coherent overall interpretation of Romans by recourse to the matrix of thought in Second Temple Judaism that formed the backdrop to Paul's own worldview. He finds the idea of covenant to be a central theme, and understands Paul's talk of righteousness in Romans to refer to the covenant righteousness of God, which, now, because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, who fulfils Israel's destiny, can be extended to include the whole world. The faithfulness of the Jewish Messiah is the answer to the problem of Adam's disobedience and sin, and is the means to recapture humankind's lost glory—not only for Israel, but for everyone. For Wright, Paul is primarily dealing with the theology of covenant which has to do with Israel, with peoples, with the world.

Dunn, too, finds the Jewish covenant to be the essential interpretive framework for Paul's theology in Romans, which is primarily

[21] N.T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul", 30–67.

concerned with corporate matters. In Romans we find the "fullest exposition Paul had attempted of a theological, apologetic, missionary, pastoral explanation for his work"; this exposition "transcends the immediacy of its several purposes and provides a coherent and integrated vision of the eschatological people of God (Gentile *and* Jew) which is of lasting value".[22] While Dunn finds the phrase "to the Jew first but also the Greek" (1:16) the important integrating motif of Romans, the subject of the Law is the chief secondary theme of the letter. This being the case, Dunn argues for a fresh assessment of Romans because of the new perspective on Paul since Sanders, which shifts the focus of Paul's arguments away from individual salvation through faith as opposed to good works to the question of participation in the covenant people without the need for adherence to badges of Jewish ethnicity.[23]

Sanders' work, of course, has been crucial in highlighting the importance of the covenant for understanding Paul. He himself sees in Romans a statement of Paul's conception of mission, which involved himself as the apostle to the Gentiles, seeking their full inclusion in the people of God (11:17–24), with the Jews being saved though jealousy generated by Paul's success among the Gentiles (11:11, 14, 25f). He points to Paul's quotations of various Hebrew scriptures about the inclusion of the Gentiles in Rom. 15:9–13, which indicate that, when the Messiah should come, it was time for the Gentiles to be brought under his rule. For Paul, of course, in Jesus, the Messiah had come, and Romans reflects Paul's covenantal theology about how both Jews and Gentiles share in the blessings of God.[24]

Campbell, too, takes the view that covenantal theology and the righteousness (i.e. covenant faithfulness) of God are the fundamental Pauline themes in Romans, which, he notes, concern "not just the individual but the people of God . . . [they are] . . . corporate rather than individualistic".[25] Campbell suggests that the letter has often been too individualistically interpreted and taken to refer to the application of the gospel to the lives of individual Christians.

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[22] J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, lxii.

[23] J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, lxiii–lxxii; that said, Dunn by no mean ignores the relevance to the individual of Paul's gospel in his commentary.

[24] E.P. Sanders, "Paul", in J. Barclay & J. Sweet (eds.), *Early Christian Thought in Its Jewish Context* (Cambridge, CUP, 1996), 112–129.

[25] W.S. Campbell, *Paul's Gospel in an Intercultural Context*, 200.

According to Campbell, however, "in Paul's theology justification and the people of God are themes which belong inseparably together".[26] He argues that, although Romans, in some respects, reads like an abstract summary of Paul's theology, it is, in fact, a response to a concrete situation in Rome, which, for Campbell, is anti-Judaism and antinomianism on the part of the Gentile believers. Paul writes to present his gospel as the fulfilment of Israel's hope, as the only adequate response to all this. Campbell suggests that, in Romans, Paul is essentially arguing about the identity of the new believing community which included both Gentiles and Jews, but in such a way that its Jewish roots were retained and "a positive hope for Israel was seen to be still viable".[27] Thus Paul saw in the Christ-event a renewed covenant, where Israel's election was both confirmed and transformed, including now Gentiles whose inclusion did not depend on Torah observance. It is primarily with such issues then the letter is concerned as opposed to ones concerning the individual.

Other writers, whilst assuming a covenantal framework, want to stress more cosmic concerns in Romans, though expressed in such a way as to meet the practical need of the Romans community. Wedderburn, in his careful analysis of the "reasons for Romans", sees the Roman church as an increasingly polarizing one, where there were, on the one hand, those who, attracted to Law-free Christianity, were seeking to sever ties with all things Jewish and, on the other, those who remained in close contact with the synagogue, both Jews by birth and Gentile proselytes and adherents, who were anxious about the other group's non-observance of Torah.[28] For Wedderburn, then, Paul writes to help the former appreciate the Jewishness of Christian tradition and the latter to understand that God's current actions in Christ are consistent with the Hebrew scriptures and that the revelation of God's righteousness now does not depend on ethnicity or Torah. Paul's fear was that his collection which he intended for Jerusalem would bring to a head the tensions that existed in Rome, and so he writes to make sure his gospel message is clear and free from misunderstanding and to help unite the Roman factions. He was particularly keen to do so, in that he wanted united

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[26] W.S. Campbell, *Paul's Gospel in an Intercultural Context*, 35.

[27] W.S. Campbell, *Paul's Gospel in an Intercultural Context*, 204.

[28] A.J.M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*, ed. J. Riches (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1988).

Roman support for his proposed mission to Spain. Wedderburn's reading of Romans, while it allows for a clear statement of Pauline theology, sees the main issues being addressed by Paul as those concerning the joint participation of Jews and Gentiles in the new people of God. Private issues with respect to an individual's relationship to God are not primarily at stake. Wedderburn takes Paul's discussion of justification in Romans as "God's putting the world right",[29] where God as judge deals with evil through Christ's death, putting all wrongs to right, and giving his life to the righteous, all this on the basis of God's grace. Cosmic and universal concerns, along with the question of who participates in all this are at the heart of Paul's arguments.

For Beker, too, Paul's Roman letter springs from an essentially Jewish world-view, and the framework for what Paul has to say, although the covenant is presumed, is a thorough-going apocalyptic way of thinking. Beker stresses the importance of the occasional and contingent nature of Romans, and that it arises out of a combination of Paul's circumstances and the social situation of the Roman church.[30] He sees the constitution of this church as being mixed, Gentile and Jew, the Gentiles probably being mainly "God-fearers" who had been converted to the gospel. He concurs with Kümmel's assessment:

> Romans manifests a double character: it is essentially a debate between the Pauline gospel and Judaism, so that the conclusion seems obvious that the readers were Jewish Christians. Yet the letter contains statements which indicate specifically that the community was Gentile-Christian.[31]

Unlike other writers who typically take the view that Romans is primarily addressed to the (predominantly) Gentile section of the Roman church, Beker concludes that Romans is primarily a dialogue with Jews. With the exception of 5:1–8:39, Beker points out the issues of how the gospel relates to Torah and Jewish salvation-history are always in the background. In Romans, then, Paul basically presents an apology for Israel where God's faithfulness to his promises to Israel is upheld, and the Gentiles are included only as a fulfilment

[29] A.J.M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*, 121.
[30] J.C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 59–93.
[31] W.G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 309.

of those promises (Rom. 15:12 with Isa. 11:1; Gen. 49:10). Paul insists on the priority and advantage of the Jew (Rom. 3:1; Rom. 1:16), despite Israel's unfaithfulness (3:3), while at the same time maintaining the universality of the gospel. Beker thus refers to the gospel that Paul explains in Romans as "universalism within the context of particularism".[32] Paul's purpose in Romans is to prevent Jewish Christianity becoming either extraneous to an increasingly Gentile church, or else sectarian and separate from Gentile Christianity. By focusing on the priority of Jewish Christianity—the first stage of the incoming of all Israel (11:16) and the beginning of God's earlier promises (11:15–16, 28, 29)—and rooting Christianity firmly in Israel's salvation-history, Paul establishes the legitimacy of Jewish Christianity. By including the Gentiles as Gentiles within God's purposes, on the other hand, he establishes also Torah-free Gentile Christianity. The gospel thus "both confirms and abolishes Israel's privilege".[33]

For Beker, then, Romans is not a compendium of Christian doctrine, but a letter that is evoked by the situation in the Roman church, but which, nevertheless produces fundamental themes of Paul's theology. These themes are all to do with how the righteousness of God demonstrated in Christ produces an eschatological community of both Jews and Gentiles who share in the beginnings of God's imminent triumph. The application of Paul's theology to the Roman situation, again, deals with grand, corporate issues and not ones primarily focused on the individual.

In addition to the reconstruction of the Roman church to identify growing tensions between Jewish and Gentile Christians that has been commonly accepted, some scholars have proposed more elaborate sociological contexts to which Paul's letter is addressed.

An early focus on the sociological background to Romans came from Minear, who saw tensions developing in the Roman church amongst not two, but rather five different groups—the strong in faith who either do or do not despise the weak in faith; the weak who either do or do not despise the strong; and the doubters.[34] Minear proposed that Paul's letter was written to remove the animosities between the various factions and to strengthen the doubters—and

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[32] J.C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 89.

[33] J.C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 91.

[34] P.S. Minear, *The Obedience of Faith: The Purposes of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans* (London, SCM, 1971).

all with an aim to unite the church in its support for Paul's mission to Jerusalem. He suggested that it is too simplistic to define the strong and the weak as simply Gentile and Jew respectively, but nevertheless sketched a picture of a church suffering from sectarian division. Minear, then, analysed Paul's letter as addressing specifically the situation among these various groups, as opposed to presenting a theological treatise. So for Minear, different sections of the letter are addressed to different groups and Paul's debate with that group shaped the structure of his argument.

Probably the most thoroughgoing sociological analysis of Romans has been by Watson, who, unlike others who assume that the two groups of Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians were part of a single congregation, supposes that they, in fact, formed two separate congregations which regarded each other with some suspicion, and indeed, hostility. For Watson, Paul's aim in writing Romans was to explain and defend his law-free gospel so as to convince Jewish Christians that they should integrate into a single Pauline congregation, while at the same time wanting to encourage Gentiles not to be superior and to show the diplomacy that such a union required.[35] Paul wanted the Jewish group in Rome to recognise the legitimacy of the Gentile group and therefore his own Gentile mission, which would result in them breaking with the Jewish community. Watson's analysis pays particular attention to the social context and function of Paul's arguments in Romans, which have all to do with a contrast between two different ways of life—the new norms and beliefs practised in the Pauline communities (characterised by "faith") versus living in conformity with the law of Moses (characterised by "works"). Paul's arguments, then, are primarily to do with the relationship between these two groups, as opposed to theological matters concerning the individual.

Other very recent interpretations of Romans are also concerned to discuss the letter against a proposed social context, with the overall sense that the letter is very much to do with issues surrounding the relationship between Jews and Gentiles who both are part of God's people. Nanos, for example, proposes a thoroughly Jewish Paul and finds in Romans a concern for the behaviour of Gentiles

[35] F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (Cambridge, CUP, 1986), 88–105.

who are participating in the Jewish communities of Rome as righteous gentiles.[36] Although Nanos is not convinced of the value of the edict of Claudius as the historical and social backdrop to Romans, he does posit Gentile-Jew tensions, in that the letter primarily addresses the issue of Christian Gentiles within the Jewish synagogue developing a subgroup identity and being tempted to reject their Jewish obligations and feeling they had no longer any need for Judaism. Nanos sees Paul's purpose in writing Romans as reminding the Romans of their obligation to the obedience of faith and of the irrevocable priority of Israel's restoration. Paul's statement that the gospel is Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἕλληνι gives the overall theme to his letter, which is written out of a concern that the Roman Gentiles have lost sight of this priority. Nanos sees the letter as grounded in a concrete historical situation, where the issues are primarily corporate, to do with Gentile participation in a new Jewish movement.

Stowers, too, has his particular social setting for Romans. Like Nanos, he suggests that the Roman audience is a Gentile one, but, far from Paul seeking to encourage Gentile participation in Judaism, Stowers proposes that Paul is seeking to dissuade Roman Gentiles from Torah observance.[37] His re-reading of Romans makes the case that the letter is an attempt by Paul to clarify for Gentile Christians the relation in which they stood to Torah, Jews and Judaism and how both Jews and Gentiles stood with regard to God's plan in Christ. Paul's purpose in writing is to point this Gentile audience, which shared a common Graeco-Roman concern for control of their passions, away from Torah observance as an effective means of self-mastery, towards faith in what God had done for them through the faithfulness of Christ. Stowers takes us in detail through the letter showing how Paul first of all outlines the precarious situation of Gentiles, then, by means of a conversation with an imaginary Jew, dismisses the effectiveness of Torah, and subsequently shows how through Christ and the Spirit they are assured of salvation and delivered from enslavement to sin. Stowers rejects previous readings of Romans which pit proper, inward religion characterised by faith against particularism and ethnic pride and points to a reading of the

[36] M. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1996).

[37] S. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews & Gentiles* (New Haven, Yale, 1994).

text that concentrates more on the issue of how Torah observance relates to Gentiles. Torah observance, like all religion in the ancient world was not something that could be separated from society, politics, the law or economics, and for Stowers, Paul sees no value in Gentiles adhering to what is a foreign regime. Torah was the constitution for the Jewish way of life, and was not the means of Gentile self-mastery. This was to be found in Christ. Stowers thus rejects attempts to read Romans with reference to our modern conception of religion, as an essentially private matter of personal belief, and roots it firmly in issues to do with the relations between Gentiles and Judaism.

Another recent sociological analysis of Romans by Elliott also focuses firmly on Gentiles as the recipients of Paul's letter. In Elliott's rhetorical analysis of Romans we find no systematic presentation of Paul's theology; rather Paul, as the apostle to the Gentiles, writes to secure ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν[38] (Rom. 1:5). Paul's aim was that the Roman Gentiles would, by their obedience to his letter, participate in the cosmic προσφορὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν (Rom. 15:16) to God. Elliott shows how Paul in Romans offered a critique of a number of Hellenistic-Christian convictions, including any sense of the Gentiles supplanting Israel in their incorporation into salvation history. The main issue that Paul was dealing with, then, was Gentile pride, and the object was both to correct this and to argue for the need for obedience to the God of Israel. Romans, according to Elliott, is not concerned with "expounding the uniquely Pauline doctrine of justification by faith alone",[39] and has suffered from an individualistic-existential skew from the Reformation right through to Bultmann. Elliott, rather, wants to emphasise the way that Paul's gospel in Romans is rooted in the covenant and points beyond the role of any one group—Jews or Gentiles—to the more cosmic scope of God's purposes. Romans, again, is focused on the broad issues of concern in mid-first century Christianity—the participation of the Gentiles in the eschatological and covenantal community.

[38] N. Elliott, *The Rhetoric of Romans*, 82.
[39] N. Elliott, *The Rhetoric of Romans*, 292.

Collective *and* Individualistic Themes

Romans, as we have seen in the work reviewed thus far, has been interpreted recently with a strongly covenantal framework in mind; with God's cosmic and universal purposes to the fore; and from a standpoint of a particular proposed set of sociological circumstances in the Roman community. All of these interpretative approaches see Romans as a presentation of Pauline theology in such a way as to address the supposed tensions in the relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome. Given that Paul's missionary concerns are predicated on the Gentiles participating in the covenant community without being or becoming Jewish, it is not surprising that the Pauline soteriology in Romans seems largely to be an explanation of how, through Christ, God's purposes are developing in such a way as to encompass both groups of people. There is little overall agreement amongst scholars on whether Paul is addressing mainly Gentiles, mainly Jews or a mixed Gentile-Jewish church, what the precise sociological situation was in Rome to which the letter is addressed, or on some of the issues of soteriology which Paul raises in the letter, such as justification or righteousness, or indeed, on precisely how we are to understand Paul's talk about the Law, but there is no doubt that the focus has been very much on understanding these things against a background of Pauline thought that is more concerned with the collective rather than the individual.

What we undoubtedly have in Romans is an exposition of the gospel that Paul understood—that the God of Israel had acted decisively in history in the person of Jesus, the Messiah, to show forth his righteousness and salvation, and that all people everywhere, Gentiles and well as Jews could now become part of the people of God, without the need for traditional Jewish ethnic and cultural observance. As one who understood himself to be the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13), Paul spent his life struggling to establish this universal view of the gospel against opposition elsewhere in the church, and Romans is the fullest account of his understanding of God's purposes brought to fulfilment in Christ. His purpose in writing, however, is rather different from that in Galatians.[40] There he

[40] N.T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul", in D.M. Hays & E.E. Johnson (eds.), *Pauline Theology Vol. III: Romans* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1995), 34.

writes polemically to counter Jewish Christians who want to impose Jewish observance on Gentile believers, whereas in Romans it is Gentile superiority he wants to address. But throughout Paul's writings, and in both Galatians and Romans, is the same overall theme and concern of the relationship between Jew and Gentile within the people of God. For Paul, God was One; God was the God of Jew and Gentile alike; all participated equally in the renewed people of God through faith in the Messiah, Jesus—stated boldly in Galatians 3:28, but explored just as forcibly throughout Romans. The collective themes in the Pauline gospel are doubtless very much in evidence; the scholarship reviewed correctly highlights this.

But this does not mean that the question of how people groups fit into God's purposes is the sum total of Paul's concern in his letter. As Moo contends, "the individual and his relationship to God are important in Romans; and there is not as much difference between the thought world of Paul and that of Luther or ourselves as Stendahl and others think".[41]

Tensions in Rome?

For one thing, it is impossible to be completely certain of the situation in Rome at the time of Paul writing his letter, despite the ready acceptance of the Claudius expulsion theory and the resulting picture of a church fragmented along Jew-Gentile lines. If this were not the case, then it might be that Paul's discussion of Jews and Gentiles in the letter should be seen as simply addressing theological issues of importance for mid-first century Christianity in general, as opposed to specific local problems, as, for example, Moo suggests.[42] The focus for Moo, in a letter written to a church comprising a mixed group of Jewish and Gentile Christians, with a majority of Gentiles, and a distinctly Gentile Christian flavour, is very much on questions to do with the participation of Jew and Gentile within salvation history and the continuity of God's plan of salvation.[43] The

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Wright highlights the problem in Rome as being "opposite" to that in Galatia, and suggests that Paul's letter is an attempt to address it without reinstating Jewish superiority or giving opportunity for proto-Marcionism.

[41] D. Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 26.

[42] D. Moo, *Romans 1–8* (Chicago, Moody, 1991), 14.

[43] D. Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 4–5, 18–22. Moo does admit to the Claudius construct as the sociological context of the Roman church, but sees Paul's purpose in writing Romans to be rooted in a wider range of factors, including Paul's own circumstances and plans, and his struggles with Judaizers in the wider church.

way in which Paul explains how both Jews and Gentiles benefit from the righteousness of God in Christ is very evident in Romans and was obviously elemental to his exposition of the gospel. A recognition of this larger concern of Paul's in no way denies that he was vitally interested in salvation of the individual. (We shall explore this more in Chapter 7).

With regards to the supposed Jew-Gentile tensions in Rome, Nanos has challengingly questioned the use of the "lens of the edict of Claudius" for reading Romans, by casting doubt on whether Suetonius' "Chrestus" actually refers to Jesus Christ, and by examining evidence in Luke 18 and Acts 28. He suggests that there is good evidence that the Claudius expulsion of Jews, whatever precisely was its extent, had nothing to do with a dispute over the Christian message, and that at the time Paul wrote to Rome there was no real hostility between the synagogue and a Christian church in the city.[44] Nanos concludes that relations between Jew and Gentile in the Christian congregation in Rome "do not seem to have degenerated to the perilous and irreversible degree suggested" by the Claudius construct.[45] Certainly, when we examine the very positive way in which Paul addresses his readership in Romans—he speaks of their ὑπακοὴ to the τὴν διδαχὴν ἣν ὑμεῖς ἐμάθετε (16:19/17); refers to them as ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ (1:7); μεστοί ἀγαθωσύνης, πεπληρωμένοι πάσης τῆς γνώσεως (15:14); with a reputation for πίστις (1:8/12); and worthy of Paul's confidence in their prayers (15:30)—it is hard to imagine a church

[44] M. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, 372–87. In Acts 28:17–22, Luke records the response of the Jewish leadership in Rome to Paul's arrival (ca. 58–62 CE). They exhibit no signs of hostility and are quite ignorant about the sect that Paul represents, except for having heard some rumours. This does not seem to tally with a Jewish-Christian controversy in the recent past. Given that Luke clearly records the expulsion of the Jews from Rome in Acts 18:2, it seems strange that in ch. 28, he makes no record of a tense situation between Jews and Christians in Rome, particularly as it would have suited his purposes to do so.

[45] M. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, 381. Nanos' view of the Christians in Rome is that they (including Gentiles) were not an entity distinct from the Jewish synagogue. The Christian group in Rome at this time was still a very Jewish one, and in his letter, Paul wrote to the righteous Gentiles within this group to encourage them in Law-respectful behaviour, which befitted those who had been included within the boundaries of the people of God. The Claudius expulsion theory as a backdrop to relations within the church with all its implications of growing hostility and tension between Jewish and Gentile Christians is not supported by Nanos' view of the social situation in the Roman congregation. Importantly, too, Nanos points to the general optimism with which Paul addresses the Romans, and the light-handed treatment of the "tensions" in 1:8, 15:14 and 16:19, which he says makes it difficult to suppose there were serious underlying hostilities.

with a growing potential for schism. Even when a divisive matter is discussed by Paul, the problem between the "strong" and the "weak" (ch. 14), it is done in such a way that you feel it is admonition from Paul, as opposed to strong condemnation or reproof, and one is left with the sense that the problem in Rome is not one that is threatening the community. There is certainly not the same sense of division that one can detect in the Galatian or Corinthian correspondence. Although the strong and the weak are often assumed to be Gentile and Jewish Christians respectively, in an interpretation which harmonises well with the Claudius construct of a dominant Gentile group displaying arrogance towards a Jewish group, this may not be the case. If one assumes, as does Stowers, that the Roman church was an entirely Gentile group,[46] many of whom came from a background of some sort of adherence to the synagogue, then the dispute in Romans 14 may have been a minor one amongst Gentile believers about how relevant certain Jewish food laws were to their new community in Christ, as opposed to a more fundamental disagreement about the nature of the identity of the people of God between Gentile and Jewish Christians. A lack of Gentile-Jewish conflict is also supported by Boers' analysis of Pauline thought in Romans. Boers maintains that Paul was not addressing a critical situation in the church, but that he was thoughtfully reflecting on the issue of the universality of salvation.[47] He focuses on the tension in Paul's thinking that Romans reveals, between his belief in the foun-

[46] Paul says that his audience is "among the Gentiles" in 1:5, 6; wants to be fruitful among them, as he has been with "the rest of the Gentiles" (1:16); speaks to those "who are Gentiles" in 11:13; clearly refers to his audience as being grafted into to Israel in 11:17f; prays that his readers will be encouraged so that they may glorify God and goes on to say that the purpose of Christ's coming was that the Gentiles might in fact glorify God (15:5–12), with the clear implication that his readership is Gentile; boasts of being a "minister to the Gentiles" (15:16), and of his ministry producing the "obedience of the Gentiles" (15:18), again with the implication that his audience is to be numbered amongst this group; and refers mostly to Gentiles in those he names in ch. 16—see P. Lampe, "The Roman Christians of Romans 16", in K.P. Donfried (ed.), *The Romans Debate*, 216–30. For a strong defence of a Gentile-only audience for Romans, see S.K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 21–33. Also, see J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, xiv; A. Jülicher, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (London, Smith and Elder, 1904), 112–15; D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 11; J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London, SCM, 1959), 200–209; W. Schmithals, *Der Römerbrief: Ein Kommentar* (Gütersloh, Mohn, 1988), 9–89.

[47] H. Boers, *The Justification of the Gentiles: Paul's Letters to the Galatians and Romans* (Peabody, Hendrikson, 1994), 140–42.

dational nature of God's prior relationship with Israel and his insistence that salvation could not solely be the preserve of ethnic Israel.

That there existed, then, Gentile-Jewish tensions in the community in Rome to which Paul wrote in quite the way commonly proposed of late, may not be entirely clear and caution is required. If, as Stowers suggests, the Roman congregation were exclusively a Gentile one; if as Nanos maintains, the Claudius expulsion and subsequent return of Jews to Rome did not form the social context of the Romans church—then there is not perhaps the same impetus to focus on collective matters so intently when interpreting what Paul has to say. Once we begin to move away from Paul addressing directly two groups experiencing tension, then there is more room for seeing what Paul has to say in Romans in a broader, anthropological sense. And that, perhaps, is the way in which Romans ought to be seen—obviously addressing the broad issue of Jew and Gentile within God's purposes that was such a live issue in Paul's day, but, importantly, addressing fundamental issues about the human condition and personal salvation.

A Consideration of Paul

Concentration on collective matters when reading Romans must also be tempered by a consideration of Paul himself. As a normal man of his time—i.e. as a self-conscious, creative individual continually relating to other such individuals—Paul must have been aware of the individual religious implications of his faith and it is almost unthinkable that in a letter such as Romans, where, as we have seen, for a number of reasons he gives his most thorough exposition of the gospel as he understands it, we should not be able to detect some sense of concern for the individual's salvation. It is important to bear in mind Cohen's critique of modern anthropological approaches to the self and culture which deny individual creativity, self-reflection and pro-activity in pre-modern cultures, and his assertion that for all societies, at all times, "the self has primacy". With this in mind, the individual thinking self which is the essence of humanness must be taken into consideration when reading the Pauline texts for a sole focus on the collective issues (that are undoubtedly there) in Paul would be both to deny the self-conscious self in Paul and his readers and to miss some of the meaning in the texts.

Given the anthropological studies we have reviewed which help to categorise a society as either collective or individualistic, we must,

as we have already observed, describe Paul's world as much more collective than our own modern Western society. His world displayed nothing of modern individualism. Yet selfhood and individuality were just as important human characteristics then as now, and, given the way in which this can be recognised in classical and Hellenistic Greek literature and in the tradition of Greek philosophy, it would be surprising if Paul's writings did not give evidence of such characteristics. Paul, was, after all a successful missionary to the Gentiles in the Greek cities of the Mediterranean world, and, as such, must have been able to express his gospel in a way that appealed to the needs of his listeners.[48] Such needs, given the sense of self and individuality we have seen, must have included individual, psychological, religious needs.

We have reviewed already the rise in individuality and individual enterprise in the social setting of the cities of the Hellenistic world in which Paul worked, and also the development of religious and philosophical approaches that attest to the search for individual redemption and salvation from external, deterministic powers, all of which indicate that there should be points of contact between these concerns and the Pauline gospel as found in his letters.

Of course, the scholarly consensus of recent years is that Paul's thoroughly Jewish pedigree and worldview, moulded by his Pharisaic upbringing, remained formative and definitive for the shaping of his theology, his mission and his practice throughout his life and is the vital cultural backdrop against which to read Paul's letters.[49]

In Hengel's study of the "Pre-Christian Paul", he makes the case that Paul's mother tongue was Greek (his Letters display a good command of the language), that he had learned the Jewish scriptures primarily in the form of the LXX (he appears entirely at home with it) and that he had attended a good Greek elementary school.[50] Despite all this, Hengel notes that the Greek literature from Homer

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[48] C.K. Barrett, *Paul: An Introduction to His Thought* (London, Chapman, 1994), 56, suggests that Paul wrote his letters which met the needs of his readers in the "light of what he knew of his environment", including "at least a smattering of Greek culture".

[49] Typical is the view of J.D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1998), 716, who comments that "Paul's faith remained in large measure the faith and religion of his fathers . . . Even as apostle to the Gentiles, he remained Paul the Jew".

[50] M. Hengel, *The Pre-Christian Paul* (London, SCM, 1991), 38, 39.

to Euripedes normally confronted by boys in the gymnasium was quite foreign to Paul, unlike Philo and other contemporary Jewish authors who wrote in Greek.[51] Paul's writings suggest rather that the literature he is at most at home with is the Septuagint and related Jewish religious writings. All this, then, points to a very Jewish education which culminated in the study of Pharisaic scribal learning in the school of Gamaliel in Jerusalem as a young man.[52] Hengel builds a picture, then, of Paul as a Diaspora Jew, who was educated in Greek, but was, culturally, thoroughly Jewish. Paul himself, of course, boasts of his Jewish education and pedigree—a Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων, a Φαρισαῖος (Phil. 3:4–6), περισσοτέρως ζηλωτὴς ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων (Gal. 1:13–15)—on a number of occasions. Barclay's recent analysis of Paul as a Diaspora Jew finds him thoroughly Jewish and decidedly un-Hellenistic in his worldview and theology.[53] Barclay too notes the dearth of any explicit or implicit references to Greek literature in Paul's letters and finds the main thrust of Pauline theology to be "inherently antipathetic to any . . . attempt to find common cause with Hellenistic culture".[54] Rather, Paul's theology is shaped by his Jewish heritage and traditional biblical language and categories. Barclay thus places Paul low on an "acculturation" scale with respect to Hellenism, with no more than an elementary knowledge of Greek philosophy or literature. For Barclay, Paul is an anomaly—he has little knowledge or interest in Hellenistic culture and in this sense can be viewed alongside the most particularistic and conservative versions of Judaism of his day—yet his social practice in mixing with, eating with, and welcoming Gentiles into his communities and abandoning key Jewish practices in the course of his mission, shows a high degree of assimilation to the Hellenistic world in which he lived.[55] It is Paul's Jewish worldview, then, that is definitive for the formation of his theology.[56]

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[51] M. Hengel, *The Pre-Christian Paul*, 38.

[52] M. Hengel, *The Pre-Christian Paul*, 61.

[53] J. Barclay, "Paul Among Diaspora Jews: Anomaly or Apostate?", *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 60, 1995, 104–111; idem, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 381–95.

[54] J. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 391.

[55] J. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 387; idem, "Paul Among Diaspora Jews", 103–104.

[56] Precisely what sort of Jew Paul was has, of course, been the matter of considerable debate amongst both Jews and Christians. Jewish comment includes: J. Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1943); H.J. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology*

But did Paul's Jewish background produce any more of a collective outlook in his letters than if he had come from a non-Jewish background? Again, our anthropological research regarding the "primacy of the self" stills holds, even for someone from a cultural background that stressed collective values and where collective identity was of very great importance. Within such a cultural framework, individuals still operated as creative agents with ambitions, needs, desires and religious aspirations which they sought to fulfil. We have already noted Hengel's research on the Hellenisation of Judaism in our period, and his view that Jews shared with Greeks a sense of the religious individual and of individual eschatological salvation,[57] as well as Davies' judgement that there was a heightened sense of individual religious experience and piety in second Temple Judaism.[58] It would seem that there was nothing in Paul's Jewish background that would have precluded him from having a concern for the individual self in his understanding of matters pertaining to salvation.

On the contrary, our investigation into the anthropology of the ancient self, the process of Hellenisation, the development of religion in the Hellenistic period, and Second Temple Judaism, all point to the likelihood that Paul must have been concerned with the individual and his or her religious needs, and that his letter to the Romans should be read in a way that gives full recognition to this, albeit within a framework of more collective ways of thinking.

In addition, our review of cognitive models of culture indicates that an individual should not be seen as subordinate and dominated by the culture in which he lives.[59] Although, then, it is helpful to view Paul's Jewish background as providing the basis of his worldview and the material from which he formed his theology, it should not be seen as completely determinative of Pauline thought. We have seen how cognitive models of culture challenge previously-held views about culture as an external force impinging upon helpless individuals, and how important it is to recognise an individual's personal cultural processing power, as well as shared behaviours and world-

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of the Apostle in the light of Jewish Religious History (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1961); A.F. Segal, *Paul the Convert* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990); D. Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994).

[57] See Chapter 5.

[58] See Chapter 5, 78.

[59] See Chapter 2.

views. Paul undoubtedly was able to think individually and critically about his own culture and theological background, and formulate his own version.[60] His letters indicate a strong commitment to his own traditions, especially to the authority of the Jewish scriptures, but there can be no doubting that he was able to mould these in the light of his experience of the risen Christ.[61] We can see Paul do this in both Romans and Galatians, for example, where he sets aside commonly held Jewish notions of ethnic superiority, and yet remains, at least in his own eyes, faithful to Jewish tradition and scripture. The fact, then, that his tradition exhibited strong emphasis on the community's relationship to God does not necessarily mean that we should be able to see nothing else in Paul's writings.

Conclusion

The contention is that although we may recognise important corporate concerns in Paul in Romans, we must not dismiss a reading of Romans that gives room to consideration of the individual. As we have already seen, some biblical scholars want to deny any potential for more individual meanings in the New Testament texts, so convinced are they of the collective or even anti-individualistic nature of first century Graeco-Roman society. With a viewpoint similar to that of Martin or Malina who deny the existence of the autonomous self in this world, there can be no room for allowing Paul's audience at Rome a sense of individual, psychological, salvation needs which his gospel addressed or for any real explanation by Paul of how any one individual fits into God's plans and how that individual experiences God's salvation. With religion playing only a collective, social role, the emphasis is very much on social inclusion of

[60] B. Witherington III, *The Paul Quest*, 33, 184–203. Witherington (33), suggests that "Paul believed that radical change can happen to a person, overcoming stereotypes and stigmas of gender, generation and geography".

[61] James W. Aageson, *Written Also for Our Sake: Paul and the Art of Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, Westminster/John Knox, 1995). Aageson shows how Paul used his Jewish skills of biblical interpretation and put them in the service of his Christology and ecclesiology. He makes the case that Paul's scriptural interpretation emerged out of both his own personal religious conviction and his encounter with the developing tradition of the early church (60); N.T. Wright, "*What Saint Paul Really Said*" (Oxford, Lion, 1997), 83f. Wright argues that Paul's critique of Judaism was from "within" the tradition, reinterpreting the Hebrew scriptures to reflect his new belief about how God was working out his purposes through the Messiah, Jesus.

the individual who has no real psychological awareness apart from the identity which membership of his group confers.

Although Romans clearly discusses the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, and it is important to understand the circumstances both in Paul's life and the life of the Roman community which gave rise to the letter, the precise social situation at Rome is not entirely clear, and thus caution must be exercised with interpretations of the letter that focus entirely on a presumed sociology at Rome. These typically narrow the focus in Romans to matters concerning the interaction of the Jew and Gentile groups, which does little justice to a Pauline concern with personal salvation.

The likelihood, however, given our consideration to date, is that we might find in Paul a more balanced theology of individual and the community, where there is a concern for an individual's relationship with God within an overarching community narrative and view of the purposes of God which concerned both the people of God and the individual members of that people. We now turn to our texts in Romans to discover evidence of Paul's concern for the individual.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE INDIVIDUAL AND SALVATION: ROMANS 1:16, 17

Romans 1:16, 17

16 Οὐ γὰρ ἐπιαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐγγέλιον, δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστιν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἕλληνι.
17 δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, καθὼς γέγραπται.· ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται

Introduction

For many scholars, these two verses are key to the understanding of Romans.[1] Barrett sums this up by saying, "Most commentators recognise in them the 'text' of the epistle; it is not wrong to see in them a summary of Paul's theology as a whole".[2] Here Paul refers to the "gospel" and his own relation to it, relates this gospel decisively to "salvation", states clearly the universal nature of salvation, and introduces the major theme of the "righteousness of God", and the key element of "faith" with respect to the issues of salvation and righteousness. These verses are "clearly the thematic statement for the entire letter . . . giving both the raison d'être for Paul's missionary endeavour and the outline of the main argument to be developed through chaps. 1–15".[3]

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[1] Barth, Barrett, Brunner, Cranfield, Dodd, Dunn, Fitzmyer, Käsemann, Kümmel, Nygren, Wright and Ziesler all specifically designate vv. 16 and 17 as introducing the theme of the letter, which is broadly and generally seen as the revelation of God's righteousness to the end of salvation, effective for everyone, by means of faith: C.K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Black, London, 1957; 2nd ed. 1962), 27–31; K. Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 35–42; E. Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans* (London, Lutterworth, 1959) 16; C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 87–102; C.H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1932), 8–18; J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 46–49; E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 21–32; J.A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 253–255; W.G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 306; A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (SCM, London, 1952), 65–92; M.A. Seifrid, *"Justification by faith" in the Letter to Rome*, N.T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul", 64; J. Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (London, SCM, 1989), 67–73.

[2] C.K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 27.

[3] J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 37, 46.

Since the verses seemingly so succinctly sum up the overall thrust of Romans, it is no surprise that earlier commentators saw in them pointers to the issue of the relationship between an individual and God, which is on the basis of a person's faith, the question of individual justification and salvation being the main theme of Romans for exegetes pre-Sanders. Typically such scholars will highlight the words characteristic of Paul's vocabulary—gospel, power, salvation, faith, Jew, Gentile and righteousness—which are all seen as working within a framework that is concerned with the sinful plight of an individual in need of salvation, and the opportunity afforded him or her through the righteousness of God at work in the gospel. As Cranfield says, "What Paul is saying here, then, is that the gospel is God's effective power active in the world of men to bring about deliverance from His wrath in the final judgement and reinstatement in that glory of God which was lost through sin".[4]

More recent scholarship, as we have seen, focuses much more in Romans on Paul's concerns about the relationship between Jews and Gentiles within the Christian church. Whenever the social background of the letter is taken into account and the letter is seen as addressing a concrete socio-historic situation, as opposed to being a piece of systematic theology, Paul's concern with the Jew/Gentile issue comes to the fore. In a letter, then, where Paul is taken up with the need to address Roman Gentile feelings of superiority over fellow church members who are Jews, the key words in these passages which were previously interpreted within an individualistic framework (gospel, salvation, faith, righteousness) are now cast in a more group-oriented light. Furthermore, the idea of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, which is so fundamental to Paul's exposition of his gospel,[5] is now seen in much more relational and social terms, thus prompting new interpretations of Paul that are more collective in their focus. Given the importance of the righteousness language that Paul introduces to us in this preliminary setting out of his theme in vv. 16 and 17, we will undertake a brief discussion of the Jewish background to this language and what Paul meant by it. This, as we will observe, has

[4] C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 89.

[5] The phrase is found repeatedly in Paul's letters—e.g. 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9, but pre-eminently in Romans—1:17; 3:21, 22, 25, 26; 10:3.

for many scholars served to focus attention on matters to do with the collective, rather than the individual.

δικαιοσύνη and δίκαιος: Relational Concepts

The focus over the past number of years on the importance of the Jewish background and context of the New Testament texts has highlighted the relational as opposed to purely forensic meaning of the idea of "righteousness",[6] and many scholars now want to think of δικαιοσύνη του θεοῦ as reflecting the "faithfulness" of God, and of δίκαιος, as applied to believers, as primarily highlighting a person's status as part of the faithful, covenant community. Such an understanding of these ideas will of necessity have important implications for interpreting Paul's letter to the Romans, righteousness being such a central theme.[7]

Traditionally post-Reformation theology has discussed and debated the meaning of righteousness in a way that treats the term as primarily an abstract ethical quality. Luther referred to it as "die Gerechtigkeit, die vor Gott gilt" (the righteousness which is valid before God) and Calvin thought of it as the righteousness which God approves,[8] giving us the sense of a certain level of standing which needs to be attained (and which only Christ can provide) to gain God's approval. This sense is borne out in some of the older commentators from the nineteenth century.[9] John Murray is typical

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[6] See e.g. E.R. & P.J. Achtemeier, "Righteousness in the OT," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* 4.80–85; J.D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1998), 341; J.A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic And Theological Inquiry* (SNTSMS 20: Cambridge, CUP, 1972), 34–43.

[7] A number of commentators, in particular, from Germany, want to make righteousness the main theme of Romans—e.g. A. Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit. Ein Kommentar zum Römerbrief* (Stuttgart, Calwer, 1935); H. Schlier, *Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* (Freiberg, Herder, 1977); U Wilckens, *Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* (Zürich, Benziger/Neukirchen Verlaf, 1978); P. Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, transl. S.J. Hafemann (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1994).

[8] J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (E.T., Grand Rapids, 1947), *ad* 1:17.

[9] H.A. Meyer, *Über den Brief des Paulus an die Römer* (Göttingen, Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1836, 1872) on 1:17 speaks of "the righteousness which proceeds from God"; F.A. Philippi, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (E.T., Edinburgh, 1878) *ad* 1:17, refers to the righteousness that avails with God.

of much discussion in our own century, in describing δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as a "God-righteousness", that is, a divine ethical quality which is "dynamically made manifest for our justification". It is the idea of God's own ethical quality offered to us, "supervening upon our sin and ruin", and thus giving us the opportunity of salvation.[10]

Recent Pauline scholarship, however, has begun to reconsider the ideas behind Paul's righteousness/justification language, seeking to understand it by uncovering its Old Testament background. The suggestion is that thinking of righteousness as an abstract ethical quality is a modern approach that has derived from the Graeco-Roman tradition where righteousness and justice are absolute ethical norms which can be used to judge particular claims and duties.[11]

In Old Testament thinking, however, righteousness (Heb. root צדק) is a much more relational concept, where people are judged righteous in terms of fulfilling the demands of their relationships.[12] For example צדק expresses the loyalty of a king to his people, in executing justice and righteousness and in fulfilling his obligation to the community.[13] Tamar, though acting like a prostitute, was said to be more righteous than Judah because she fulfilled the claims of the family.[14] Righteousness is not, therefore, some standard that a person could attain to, independent of anyone else; it was grounded in tangible personal relationships.

The same idea is true of God's righteousness. It consists in his saving acts by which he fulfils his covenant obligations to his people, Israel. Thus, God's righteousness does not consist in satisfying some ideal of justice external to himself. It is to do with fulfilling the demands of the relationship in which he has placed himself with his people. Specifically this is expressed in delivering Israel from her

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[10] J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1959, 1965, 1968, reprint 1990), 31; for a similar conclusion, see also C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans Vol. 1*, 98; for a summary of the debate as to whether "the righteousness of God" is a subjective or objective genitive, see J. Reumann, *Righteousness in the New Testament* (Philadephia, Fortress, 1982), 66.

[11] See e.g. G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* 1 (Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd, 1962), 370–376.

[12] H. Cremer, *Die paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre im Zusammenhang ihrer geschichtlichen Voraussetzungen* (Gutersloh, Mohn, 1900), 34–38.

[13] 2 Sam. 8:15; 15:4; 23:3.

[14] Gen. 38:26.

enemies,[15] and in granting the covenant blessings of life, peace, health and victory—i.e. in providing salvation.[16]

All this is predicated on God's free grace, in choosing Israel and in assuming his covenant responsibilities. Hence righteousness and salvation are virtually synonymous,[17] which becomes very apparent in both the Psalms and Deutero-Isaiah.[18]

This is further supported by Schmid's thesis that the term "righteousness" designated a harmonious cosmic world order which Yahweh purposed for his creation. Schmid sought to take the concept away from the idea of covenant, and argued that it was a comprehensive cosmic order which was based on God's benevolent kingship.[19] Schmid's ideas have not gained universal approval,[20] but nevertheless indicate the close relationship between righteousness and salvation in Ancient Near Eastern thought.

In terms of a covenantal understanding, Yahweh's loyalty to Israel carried a commensurate demand for the people's loyalty to him. The maintenance of the covenant relationship was dependent upon their obedient and faithful response to the covenant obligations, through faithfulness to the Law. As Sanders has shown, law keeping was not the basis of membership of the covenant (God's grace determined that), but was the expression of loyal, covenant membership.[21]

Vital to the fulfilment of covenant demands, alongside loyalty towards God, was proper behaviour to the rest of the community. This is expressed in the dual scope of the decalogue—right relations with both God and one's neighbours. A consistent theme throughout the Old Testament is the integration of these two obligations,

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[15] Ex. 6:6–7; 1 Sam. 12:7; Dan. 9:16; Mic. 6:4.

[16] P. Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, 30, summarises the position in the Old Testament and early Judaism well: "God's righteousness thus means the activity of God through which he creates well-being and salvation in history (specifically that of Israel), in creation and in the situation of the earthly or eschatological judgement".

[17] J.D.G. Dunn, "The Justice of God", *Journal of Theological Studies* 43 (1992), 17.

[18] Ps. 31:1; 35:24; 71:15; 143:11; Isa. 45:21; 51:5, 6, 8; 62:1–2.

[19] H.H. Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit als Weltordnung: Hintergrund und Geschichte des alttestamentlichen Gerechtigkeitsbegriffes*, Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 40 (Tübingen, Mohr, 1968).

[20] H.G. Reventlow, "Righteousness as Order of the World: Some Remarks towards a Programme in Justice and Righteouness" in H.G. Reventlow and Yair Hoffman (eds.), *Justice and Righteousness* (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1992), 163–172.

[21] E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.

that it is not possible to have one without the other. Thus righteousness can be described, as Koch has done, as "faithfulness to the community".[22]

Of particular importance in this regard is the obligation to the disadvantaged members of the community, the poor, the widow, the orphan and the foreigner. This was both enshrined in civil law and preached by the prophets.[23]

צדק, then, is a term essentially concerning concrete human relationships and social phenomena, rather than an abstract and ethical norm.[24] The Old Testament concept of righteousness is thus defined in terms of relationships and the responsibilities arising out of them.[25] God is righteous because he acts in saving power on behalf of his people; his people are righteous by maintaining their covenant obligations which involve just relationships one with another, with a particular care and concern for the disadvantaged.

From this a number of scholars maintain that "being righteous" means in fact "being part of the covenant community" (and necessarily fulfilling covenant responsibilities). It has the sense of "covenant membership" or "covenant status".[26] A righteous person was someone who was, by virtue of his national heritage and personal continued participation in the covenant, a member of the covenant community.

Righteousness in the Context of Jewish Sectarianism

The Second Temple period saw the development of considerable sectarianism within Judaism. The various sects included the Pharisees,

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[22] K. Koch, *Um das Prinzip der Vergeltung in Religion und Recht des Alten Testament*, Wege der Forschung, 125 (Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1932), 87–129.

[23] Deut. 24:10–22 and Amos 5; Micah 3; Isa. 58; Ezek. 18:5–9; Zech. 7:9, 10.

[24] L. Epsztein, *Social Justice in the Ancient Near East and the People of the Bible* (London, SCM, 1986), 47–48. He quotes G. von Rad, "'Righteousness' and 'Life' in the Cultic Language of the Psalms" in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (Edinburgh, London, Oliver & Boyd, 1966), 371, "צדק is a concept of real relation between 2 parties and not the relationship of an object under consideration to an idea."

[25] For further references in support of this understanding of righteousness, see J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 40, 41.

[26] E.g. N.T. Wright, "Putting Paul Together Again", in J.M. Bassler (ed.), *Pauline Theology, Volume 1: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1991), 202.

Sadducees. Essenes, the "fourth philosophy"—Sicarii and Zealots—as well as the Samaritans, the Egyptian Therapeutae, and, of course, the Christians. Each sect, to a greater of lesser extent set itself apart from the other groups with its own norms with respect to the law, the Temple and the Scriptures,[27] and significant hostility at times existed between the various factions.[28]

The differences in expression of Jewish identity and life within the growing diversity within Judaism were indicative of the different ideas of what it meant to be God's chosen people, and the different concepts of the coming deliverance by God. Wright has provided an excellent summary of the sectarian positions within Judaism at this time.[29]

Cohen sees the roots of sectarianism beginning in the Persian period, and points to two groups in Nehemiah 10 (the "congregation of the exile" and the "covenanters") and the prophetic school in Isaiah 65 as examples of groups within Israel which saw themselves as a group within a group—the embodiment of authentic Judaism, or "God's chosen servants".[30] This sort of "remnant theology" was carried on by the later Jewish sects, whereby some began to own for themselves claims made for the whole of Israel, with the result that they effectively rejected the wider group which did not share their particular beliefs and practices.[31] Of particular note in this respect was, as we have seen, Qumran, which saw itself as the rightful heir to Judaism.[32] For the Essenes, election now was focused upon their group, rather than on the nation as a whole. Adherence to the group and group norms was what constituted being a part of the elect.

This highlights the question of who are the righteous and who are the wicked within the outlook of Jewish sectarianism. As we have seen, the Hebrew sense of righteousness had to do with covenant membership. Being part of the "wicked" or being a "sinner" was essentially the opposite of this—i.e. being outside the boundaries of the covenant. It is clear, therefore, that as sectarianism developed in

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[27] S.J.D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 128–134.
[28] C. Rowland, *Christian Origins*, 67.
[29] N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 167–213.
[30] S.J.D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 140–143.
[31] C. Rowland, *Christian Origins*, 65.
[32] See chapter 5, 81–84.

Judaism, and with it the sense of being a "remnant" or being the true Israel, that it was members of the sect that were to be considered righteous and those outside the sect who were to be numbered with the wicked. Now not only Gentiles are to be considered "sinners", but those Jews who do not conform to the true expression of Judaism. Only by embracing the community of the sect and its practices could one be part of the elect and truly righteous.

Justification

The demonstration of God's righteousness on behalf of Israel, his salvation, from a situation of oppression and suffering, can be said to be a final vindication of his people. God's rescue of his people from pagan oppression is a vindication of Israel as truly being God's people, a demonstration to all the world of her identity as the elect of God. This, in essence, is God's judgement (משפט) in favour of his people. Wright, in fact refers to this vindication as Israel's justification.[33] The Community Rule from Qumran links explicitly God's righteousness and salvation to justification in this way.[34]

Wright points out that the first century Jewish sense of justification had little to do with piety or abstract virtue.[35] It was the conviction that each of the Jewish sects had that their particular outlook and way of life would be vindicated when the day of God's intervention came, when the Temple would be restored, the land cleansed and Israel exalted over her enemies.

Again, the Hebrew sense of judgement is rather different from modern western ideas. The Old Testament judge cannot be understood in the modern sense, simply as someone who pronounces a sentence.[36] A judge in early Old Testament writings was primarily one to whom a person appealed for the defence of rights. In his in-depth study of Hebrew legal terms and concepts, Bovati suggests "it is not at variance with regards to judging, nor contrary to . . . impartiality . . . that a magistrate should personally take on a cause . . . the cause of truth and justice, which the judge is called upon to protect

[33] N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 334f.
[34] 1QS 11.2–3, 5, 11–12.
[35] N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 336.
[36] J. Van der Ploeg, "Shipat et mishpat", *Old Testament Study* 2, 144–155, shows the primitive idea of shapat (to judge) refers to all that takes place when two opposed parties come before the relevant authority to claim their rights.

and promote; judging indeed means precisely abandoning neutrality in order to save the innocent".[37] He goes on to show that the act of judging is an intervention on behalf of the righteous, whose rights have been threatened. In addition, his analysis of the verb שׁפט (to judge) indicates it was often linked with the defence of the downtrodden in such a way that it is actually a gesture of compassion.[38] It can be readily seen, therefore, that judgement in such a case was an act of vindication.

Yahweh, of course, is presented in the Hebrew Bible as the supreme judge and when his judgement was invoked, it was in essence a request for assistance. When he granted judgement, it was a saving act,[39] an appeal by the righteous for him to take up their cause.

This idea of judgement as a saving act and as a vindication of God's people is present throughout the Old Testament, for example in the Psalms,[40] and in Deuteronomy 32, where Moses, in his closing discourse, refers to God's judgement as his people's salvation. Commonly in the Israelite and Mesopotamian psalm literature we find pleas for salvation,[41] with the supplicant appealing to God's judgement that his innocence and righteousness be proved and God's deliverance made manifest.[42] Here the divine salvation is presented as a divine court decision, on behalf of the oppressed.

Typically in the prophets משׁפט and צדק do not refer to the strict codes of justice. They refer to action on behalf of the poor, the needy and the oppressed.[43] Yahweh again is seen as the judge par excellence who provides help for those who are disadvantaged. He secures justice (משׁפט) for the orphan and widow, and loves the stranger, giving him bread and clothing.[44] Yahweh performs righteous

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[37] P. Bovati, *Re-establishing Justice: Legal Terms, Concepts and Procedures in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 201.

[38] P. Bovati, *Re-establishing Justice*, 202f.

[39] J.L. McKenzie," Aspects of Old Testament Thought" in R.E. Brown, J.A. Fitzmyer, R.E. Murphy (eds.), *The New Jerome Bible Commentary*, 2nd edn. (London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1989), 1307.

[40] E.g. Psalm 54:1 "Save me, God, by the power of your name, and vindicate me through your might".

[41] M. Weinfeld, "Justice and Righteousness—The Expression and its Meaning" in H.G. Reventlow and Y. Hoffman (eds.), *Justice and Righteousness* (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1992), 242.

[42] E.g. Ps. 43:1 "Save me (שׁפטני, lit. judge me), O God . . . Rescue me from the treacherous . . ."; Ps. 7, 26, 35.

[43] E.g. Zech. 7:9–10; Jer. 7:5–6.

[44] Deut. 10:18.

acts and acts justly (משפטים) for all the oppressed.[45] He does justice (משפט) for the oppressed; he gives bread to the hungry.[46]

With such a background to understanding Yahweh's judgements for and on behalf of his people and of the oppressed, we can begin to understand the meaning of this concept in Jewish eschatological thought. In the first century CE, Israel saw herself as the oppressed, crying out to Yahweh for a righteous judgement, for vindication, or to put it another way, for justification. Yahweh's decisive soteriological act on his people's behalf, then, would constitute her justification.

Wright contends, however, that not only is justification future, it is already present.[47] The present justification is secret, to be at last made public by Yahweh's action. But already the true covenant members are marked out by covenant faithfulness, which is indicated by certain membership badges that varied from Jewish group to Jewish group. (And, of course, as Dunn and others have sought to show, the dispute over these covenant badges was the essence of the major dispute within the early church over the question of adherence to Torah for Christians.)

We have already considered the way in which the Jewish sects considered *their* group to be the true expression of Judaism, and membership of their group to constitute true righteousness. Only by remaining true to the group can an individual be part of those who will at last be vindicated by God. It is this group which will experience the faithfulness of God and share with him in his New Age. Because of this, Wright points out that, since adherence to the group now assures vindication in the future, there is a sense that the particular brand of covenant faithfulness that the group espouses is the indicator of vindication or justification at this point in time. Justification is therefore both present and future.

Vindication is obviously an important concept to a sect, whereby the sect's stances is to be affirmed at some point as having been right all along. So sure, however, is the sect of its authenticity, that merely adhering to the sect's praxis is a sign of vindication already. In this way, then, Old Testament ideas of judgement were moulded in the thinking of the Jewish groups to suit their sectarian outlook.

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[45] Ps. 103:6.
[46] Ps. 146:7.
[47] N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 337.

Justification, then, was a key concept in Jewish soteriology and referred to God's vindication of his people, his judgement exercised on their behalf to bring rescue and deliverance, and the experience of his peaceful and blessed rule.

The evidence, then, when we consider the Old Testament use of righteousness and justice language, seems to point us toward understanding the terms in very relational and social contexts.[48] The spotlight falls on the community—on the relationship between God and his people; the idea of membership of the covenant community; and the idea of the salvation and vindication of the true people of God.

Paul's Use of Righteousness Language

This all becomes very important when we consider the importance of these ideas to Paul's gospel, which he introduces to us in Romans 1:16.[49] The δικαι-vocabulary is prominent particularly in Galatians and Romans, with δικαι- terminology appearing 63 times in Romans.[50] Despite Schweitzer's claim that justification in Paul was only "a subsidiary crater",[51] the importance of righteousness and justification in Jewish theology and eschatology is a strong indication that these were themes of major significance in Paul's gospel. And, indeed, the frequency of usage in Romans, where we have the most extended exposition from Paul of his gospel, bears this out.

Wright maintains that the "gospel" for Paul was the royal proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.[52] In Romans 1:2–5, Paul

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[48] P. Esler, *Galatians* (London, Routledge, 1998), 168, characterises the righteous as "the exemplary Israelite" and suggests that Old Testament righteousness language is not so much about correct behaviour as about group identity.

[49] P. Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 30, comments on the Old Testament tradition of God's righteousness as his saving action on behalf of his people, that "As Jews by birth, the New Testament witnesses have taken over this language tradition". J.D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 345, says simply that "Paul's teaching on justification was drawn immediately from the scriptural understanding of God's righteousness . . . That the language of Romans stems directly from such OT usage is well appreciated and is not in dispute".

[50] J. Reumann, *Righteousness in the New Testament*, 41–123 contains an excellent analysis of the use of the δικαιοσύνη-vocabulary.

[51] A. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (London, A. & C. Black, 1931), 225. More recently, Esler supports this view of Schweitzer, concluding that "righteousness was not at the heart of Paul's thought", and was "a subsidiary teaching deployed only in certain situations". P. Esler, *Galatians*, 159.

[52] N.T. Wright, *What St Paul Really Said*, 126.

outlines expressly the content of the gospel, which is all to do with the royal descent and incarnation of the Son, his vindication by God through the resurrection and the declaration of his Lordship. Wright points out that justification is the effect of the gospel, as opposed to its content. When we think of righteousness and justification in the sense in which we have discovered them in the Jewish scriptures, we can begin to see how this is the case.

Firstly, as we have seen before, God's righteousness refers to his saving action on behalf of his people, and his wrath executed on his people's enemies. It is essentially an expression of his covenant faithfulness to his people, as he takes action to deliver them. The Jews in the first century CE awaited this action of God in their political life to usher in a new golden age of God's rule and the end of their long experience of exile. For Paul, however, his encounter with the risen Jesus has convinced him that, in fact, in Christ, God had acted savingly in faithfulness to his covenant on behalf of his people and that the long-awaited day of deliverance had already come. In the Christ-event, the righteousness of God had actually been revealed. This was essentially the view of Käsemann, who argued that δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ was a technical phrase in Jewish apocalyptic and that it referred to the demonstration of God's salvation in commitment to the covenant.[53] Käsemann argued that Paul used the phrase in this way, but expanded the scope of its meaning to the whole of creation from the narrower Jewish sense of the commitment of God to his covenant people. More recently, commentaries by Dunn and Moo reflect the broad sense of this viewpoint, although, perhaps, seeing the background as the overall OT usage, rather than just an apocalyptic context. As, indeed, does Wright in his recent attempt to give an integrated, coherent account of the theology of Romans.[54] A broad consensus seems to exist that views the Hebrew scriptures, Judaism

[53] E. Käsemann, "God's Righteousness in Paul" (1961), trans. in "The Bultmann School of Biblical Interpretation: New Direction?", *Journal for Theology and the Church* 1 (1965), 100–110; idem, *Commentary on Romans*, 29–32; idem, *Perspectives on Paul*, trans. M. Kohl (London, SCM, 1971[1969]), 60–76. More recently, in agreement with Käsemann is D.A. Campbell, "Romans 1:17—a *Crux Interpretum* for the ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ Debate", *JBL 113/2* (1994), 265–285. Righteousness is "best understood in a . . . 'non-Western' sense . . . more like a dynamic power flowing from God to the world". It is "best understood as . . . an eschatological saving power" (270).

[54] N.T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul", 30–67, esp. 31–34.

and, in particular, covenant theology as the context within which the term "righteousness of God" must be interpreted.[55]

The term δικαιοσύνη in Romans, when not used of God, should also be considered against its Jewish background, giving the sense of "covenant status", with δίκαιος meaning "part of the righteous community" or "part of the people of God". This reflects the more relational sense of the concept in Jewish thought as opposed to an ethical-norm sense. Those who are counted righteous are those who are included in the covenant people of God, by virtue of God's grace and their response of faith(fulness) to God. Being reckoned as righteous means in effect being counted as part of the righteous, or covenant, community. God's righteousness—his covenant faithfulness expressed in saving action through the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ—results in the deliverance of his people from their enemies of sin and death, and makes them part of his covenant people—i.e. righteous. For Paul, of course, importantly, God's action is no longer restricted to those who are Jewish by nationality or who adhere to the Jewish Law, and so covenant status, or righteousness, extends to all who respond to God's action in Christ in faith. It extends to, and includes, Gentiles.

Reumann has provided a good summary of the various ways in which the righteousness language in Romans has been variously interpreted, including the Reformed view of righteousness as a gift given to the believer by God to enable him to stand on the day of judgement, the Catholic view where righteousness is a moral quality that is imparted to believers and other interpretations.[56] Only, however, when the Jewish background to the language, with the full force of its relational meaning is understood, can the terms be properly interpreted. The background we have considered briefly, which summarises much of the current consensus on the context in which Paul lived and wrote, compels us to understand the righteousness talk in Paul as having to do with participation in the (new) covenant people of God. It is primarily to do with the status of being in God's people. The ethical qualities we now associate with righteousness are not of the fundamental essence in Paul's usage, as they were not in Jewish usage, but become implied, given the response of faith that

[55] E.g. J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 40f.; D. Moo, *Romans*, 77–82.
[56] J. Reumann, *"Righteousness" in the New Testament*, 41–123 esp. 66f.

is required of a person in response to God, if that person is to become part of the new, righteous community. A faith(ful) response to God inevitably requires ethical behaviour, and so righteous status must necessarily imply faithful, moral, ethical—righteous—behaviour. To term someone as righteous, therefore, from Paul's point of view, means that they have responded in faith to God's saving action through Jesus Christ, they have become part of the believing community, and they are living faithfully in a way that reflects their belief. It is, as we have found it in the Old Testament, a term that denotes, primarily, covenant-people status—created by the grace of God and including all those who seek to live faithfully for God.

When we move on to consider the term "justification" (δικαιόω—to justify), again we must be careful to see the Pauline use in its Jewish context. We have seen that the Hebrew sense of "judging" or "vindication" is foremost, with the covenant sense of God as the just (righteous) judge. God hears the cry of his people and judges on their behalf by saving them from their enemies and vindicating them, or justifying them in the eyes of all around. To everyone who sees, it is plain, that in God's deliverance of his people, he has proved decisively their identity as his people. They are vindicated by his saving judgement. Such an eschatological hope, according to Wright, formed part of the worldview of first century Jews.[57] The expectation was that God would come to them to judge and punish the Gentiles and unfaithful Jews and would liberate his true people, vindicating them before the whole world.

When the sectarian nature of first century Judaism is taken into account, it is clear that what was important to each group was that their own group would be seen, ultimately, to be the true people of God, those whom God would vindicate in the eschaton. Wright is typical of many recent approaches to Romans, therefore, when he says that "justification in this setting, then, is not a matter *of how someone enters the community of the true people of God*, but of *how you tell who belongs to that community*".[58] Wright suggests that, because adherence to what any one particular group felt was a proper expression of Israel's traditions was seen as an assurance of future vindication,

[57] N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 280–228; *What St Paul Really Said*, 118–120.

[58] N.T. Wright, *What St Paul Really Said*, 119.

that there was a sense of present justification, if one belonged to the right group and acted accordingly.[59]

Paul's language of justification can be seen to reflect this Jewish outlook. For Paul, those who adhered to the Messiah, Jesus, and lived lives of faithfulness to him were those whom God would vindicate at the last. These were the true people of God, whom the great divine judge would ultimately judge in favour of. They were those who would experience God's saving power at the resurrection, and whose vindication was sure. So sure, that it could be said to have already occurred. God the sovereign judge had acted righteously on behalf of those who would believe in Jesus, in the person of Christ, and had, through Christ's life, death and resurrection, defeated all his people's enemies, thus bringing salvation and life. God in Christ, therefore, had judged righteously, making effective his vindication of his people. This overall framework, which takes Paul's covenantal background fully into account, seems to be an appropriate one against which to understand Paul's talk about justification.

Once such a framework behind Paul's righteousness/justification language is recognised, the broad thrust of Paul's concerns in Romans becomes clearer. It is undoubtedly right to admit that these have significantly to do with the outworking of God's purposes in the world and with who are the People which will participate in those purposes. Paul is concerned with the question of the faithfulness of the covenant God of Israel, and how that has been demonstrated through Christ. He is concerned with the in-breaking of that covenant God into the world's history and the sovereign claim he has on all the world's peoples, Jew and Gentile alike. He is concerned with the divine and righteous judgement of God, which has been made known, again through Christ, vindicating all those who will submit to the Lordship of Jesus and be faithful to him, and executing his wrath on the enemies of his people, and all those who wilfully remain outside the (new) covenant.

Much recent work on Romans, then, has reflected these broad concerns of Paul. As a faithful Jew, though now one who has been confronted with, and changed by, his Messiah, Paul has a vital interest

[59] N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 337; idem, *What St Paul Really Said*, 118–120.

in understanding how the Hebrew scriptures can remain true, in this new situation that has been created by the in-breaking of God in the person of Jesus. His concerns, therefore, revolve around the faithfulness of the covenant God, and how God's righteous action in Christ results in salvation for all who respond to him in faith, both Jew and Gentile. In Romans, Paul sets out his understanding of the gospel, founding it firmly in the Hebrew scriptures, and expounding it in terms of God's righteousness and the justification of those, both Jew and Gentile, who believe in what God has been doing in Christ and adhere to him. In doing so, Paul addresses both the social issues in Rome at the time of writing, and his own agenda as apostle to the Gentiles, would-be missioner to Spain, and gift bearer to Jerusalem.

The conclusion that often accompanies all this is that Paul's explanation of his gospel is not primarily to do with the personal situation of the sinner and how he or she can find a gracious God. And, certainly, post-Sanders, we can fairly safely agree that faith, in the sense of a personal, inner experience, in contrast to trying hard to please God, as a means of being justified, is far from Paul's theme in Romans. It may not be the case, however, that the meanings of righteousness and justification which we have observed to revolve around collective issues about the identity of the people of God, deny for us any concern in Paul for the implications of his gospel to the individual. In fact, the contention is that such implications are never far away for Paul.

In Rom. 1:16, 17, then, which we have seen is Paul's introduction to the overall theme which he intends to pursue in his letter, that is, the gospel of Jesus Christ, Paul tells us that the gospel is all about the power of God bringing salvation to all peoples, Jew and Gentile alike, and that it represents the revelation of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ. By this, given the Jewish background to the phrase we have explored, Paul is saying that the covenant faithfulness of Israel's God has now decisively been made known through the person of Jesus Christ. God the Righteous Judge has heard the cry of the afflicted and has acted on their behalf, to bring salvation—through the person and work of Christ. Paul here is thinking in a thoroughly Jewish manner about God and salvation, and the faithfulness of the God of the covenant; his understanding of the gospel which he is about to explain is framed quite clearly in covenantal thinking; but, of course, for Paul, the action of God in Christ now opens the opportunity for covenant membership to παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, and now faith, as opposed to

ethnic characteristics or observances, is the basis for participating in the community of the righteous.

This underlying covenantal background to Paul's talk of δικαιοσύνη can also be observed in his quotation of Habakkuk 2:4, ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται in verse 17. The meaning of this and its relevance to Paul's thinking will be explored in more detail below, but for now we can observe that the δίκαιος to which Paul is referring here has the sense of "the one who is part of the covenant or righteous people of God". Paul here sets out his understanding of the heart of the gospel—that such membership of the people of God is by faith in Christ. And here is what we shall see is the marrying of the collective issue of the identity of the people of God (it is both Jews *and* Gentiles) with an issue of prime importance for the individual—personal, individual, faith in Christ is required for any one person to become a part of this new community.

To be sure, Paul *is* concerned here with the big issue that faced the church in his day—the relationship within the people of God between Jews and Gentiles. But for Paul, the gospel had a necessary and vital personal element to it—the need for individuals, from whatever background to respond in faith to what God had done in Christ.

Collective Interpretations of Romans 1:16, 17

The prevailing tendency, however, recently, has been for scholars to emphasise the corporate concerns within Paul's gospel, often to the disparagement of notions of individual and personal relevance within it. As we have just seen, the relational sense of the righteousness/justification language that Paul uses seems to emphasis to us more collective issues of group identity and relationships. This is evident when we examine how recent commentators have interpreted vv. 16 and 17 of Romans 1.

Elliott, for example, is "scandalized at the regularity with which commentators tear Paul's statement in 1:16–17 . . . out of its context and isolate it as the "theme" of a theological essay, thus obliterating the letter's character as *praxis*".[60] Elliott is very concerned to preserve

[60] N. Elliott, *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (Sheffield, SAP, 1995), 74, 75.

the situational contingencies of Romans, which he sees as the church's gentile majority claiming for itself the privileges of Israel's covenant, but at the same time distancing itself from Judaistic practice and scapegoating the Jewish group in its midst. Thus in Romans 1:16–17, Paul is primarily highlighting and insisting on the impartial justice of God for all, in order to counteract this Jew/Gentile friction in Rome.[61] Elliott is opposed to the idea that Romans should be seen as a presentation of Pauline theology, albeit refracted through the concrete situation in Rome. He objects to seeing in Paul a system of theological beliefs which find expression in the socio-historical situation of the churches to which he writes. Rather, for Elliott, the practical situations themselves constitute Paul's thinking. Romans, he says, "is an instrument of apostolic action"; it is a rhetorical discourse aimed at persuasion and moral exhortation, rather than a considered theological treatise. So we must not think of verse 16 ("I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God . . .") as constituting a summary of Pauline theology. Rather it plays its rôle in the letter as part of Paul's overall purpose to address Gentile Christian "boasting" in Rome. Elliott supposes strong anti-Judaic feeling amongst Christian Gentiles after the return of Jewish exiles to Rome, and works on the premise that there was the danger of them being treated as scapegoats within the Christian community, by a Gentile group that wanted to claim for itself Israel's covenantal blessings. Paul writes, therefore, to counter these tendencies, and in 1:16–17 specifically does so by emphasising God's impartial justice for both Jew and Gentile alike. Elliott, then, sees the focus of these verses to be on the equality of both races before God, determined wholly by the situational context in Rome.[62] Such an approach minimises, or excludes, a reading of the text which would rely on a sense of an underlying theology or soteriology which has as its focus the individual. For Elliott, this is entirely the wrong approach and as a result, the emphasis switches right away from the individual.

Crafton also emphasises the impartiality of God in Romans 1:17 with a particular focus on the issue of communal identity.[63] Again, he roots his understanding of Romans in the social context of dis-

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[61] N. Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 130.
[62] N. Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 129, 130.
[63] J.A. Crafton, "Paul's Rhetorical Vision and the Purpose of Romans", 317–339.

cord in the church between Christian Gentiles and returning Christian Jews, and finds Paul's rhetorical purpose directed toward uniting these factions. Paul does this by emphasising on the one hand God's impartiality and on the other the solidarity of all peoples in sin and in their ability to enter into righteousness through the obedience of faith. And again, the focus is very much at the corporate level for understanding Paul's purpose in Romans:

> Paul reformulates the conflicts and disunity among the Christians in Rome as a salvation-historical issue of communal identity. Who are the people of God? What is the relationship of Christianity to Judaism? Through such questions Paul theologises the conflict situation in the Roman house churches.[64]

In Campbell's exposition of Romans 1:17, he identifies two possible readings of the words ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, in relation to the revelation of the righteousness of God. One he refers to as the "traditional anthropocentric reading", where the focus is on faith as the means of salvation. In such a reading, according to Campbell, the emphasis is on the "gospel's offer of salvation to individuals, where faith is the critical mediator".[65] Campbell dismisses this approach as "distinctly anthropocentric (and even Cartesian)". The other reading, which Campbell prefers, is the "cosmic eschatological reading", where the focus is on the revelation of God's saving power in the gospel. Campbell argues that the basic point Paul is seeking make is that the eschaton is being revealed in the gospel, and if this is so, then the traditional. anthropocentric reading is effectively ruled out. God's eschatological saving righteousness cannot depend on the faith of any one individual and therefore "ἐκ πίστεως" cannot refer to individual faith.[66] Campbell argues that this refers rather to Christ's faithfulness and wants to interpret the verse as meaning, "The eschatological saving righteousness of God is being revealed in the gospel by means of faithfulness (namely, the faithfulness of Christ), with the goal of faith/fulness (in the Christian)."[67] Campbell goes on to interpret the reference to Habakkuk in the second half of verse 17 as messianic and ὁ δέ δίκαιος as referring to Christ. The passage, thus,

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[64] J.A. Crafton, "Paul's Rhetorical Vision and the Purpose of Romans", 331.
[65] D.A. Campbell, "Romans 1:17", 270.
[66] D.A. Campbell, "Romans 1:17", 272–73.
[67] D.A. Campbell, "Romans 1:17", 281.

is all to do with the revelation of God's saving power manifested in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, and little to do with individual faith.

Nanos, who, as we have seen, wants to emphasise Paul's Jewishness, and the Jewishness of his mission, sees in Romans an outline of what he calls "Paul's law-respectful gospel" for the benefit of Gentiles who were being "tempted to disregard the practices of the Law and Jewish customs that Paul believed were essential to the righteous lifestyle that should characterize their faith in the 'God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'".[68] Again, here is an interpretation of Romans that turns on the perceived social tensions between Christian Jewish and Gentile groups in Rome. Nanos believes that at the time Romans was written, there was no separation of synagogue and church, and that Paul had no interest in such a separation. Paul's concern, then, is for the proper behaviour of Gentiles, who had come to faith in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel and Saviour of the world, within the Jewish communities in Rome. Nanos seeks to show how, in his letter, Paul reminds the Gentiles who were associating with the Roman Jews of the importance of the "obedience of faith" and applies Judaic halakhah to define the boundaries of their behaviour. The Gentiles, having joined the historical people of God, suffered the temptation to boast, mistakenly, against those Jews in Rome who had not yet recognised Jesus as the promised Messiah, or had not yet concluded that Gentiles could be co-participants with them in the blessings of God without the need to become Jews. Paul writes to refute this and to encourage them to recognise the pre-eminence of Israel and to submit to the obedience of faith—i.e. Judaic norms of righteousness and purity. Against this backdrop, Nanos sees vv. 16–17 of ch. 1 as stressing the continuity of Christian faith with Israel's faith and God's faithfulness to Israel. For Nanos the phrase "to the Jew first and also to the Greek" stresses the priority of Israel within salvation history in Paul's thinking, and, for him, this enhances his picture of a Paul still operating in a very Jewish mindset and framework. How Gentiles can be included and live within the context of Israel is the issue uppermost in Paul's mind in Nanos' interpretation. Paul's concerns are again very much collective in nature, centring on the faithful fulfilment of God's promises to Israel, despite the "hardening" of some of the chosen people, and the participation under certain con-

[68] M. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, 30.

ditions of Gentiles in God's purposes. For Nanos, these are the issues to the fore, and there is little or no personal or individual application in what Paul says.

Another writer who emphasises a more collective interpretation of Romans 1:16–17 is Watson, who, although his interpretation of the letter differs markedly from Nanos, in that he sees Romans as primarily addressed to Jewish Christians to persuade them to accept the legitimacy of Gentile Christianity, highlights the phrase "for the Jew first . . ." as the key element in a passage which is effectively Paul's own explanation of his purpose in writing Romans. Watson hypothesises that there were two main Christian groups in Rome—one comprising those from a Jewish background, who observed the Law, and one which consisted of Gentiles who were converts and associates of Paul, who did not. Because of the tensions that this produced, Paul wrote his letter to persuade the Jewish Christians of the legitimacy of his own group, which represented the Gentile mission. Watson points to verse 16 as indicating the dual nature of the Roman congregation, and finds here evidence that Paul was seeking to persuade those who took comfort in their priority and preeminence that his own Gentile group in Rome was just as legitimate a participant in God's salvation. Thus these verses contribute to Watson's social theory of Pauline Gentile Christian sectarianism and group legitimation, which is the context in which he feels Paul's discussions of themes such as law, works, grace and faith are to be regarded.[69] Watson's approach is unabashedly sociological in character, and by its very nature regards the dynamics of the interaction of the groups in question—Roman Jewish and Gentile Christians—to be determinative of Paul's actions and writings. Pauline theology is thus reduced by Watson to Paul constructing "a theoretical rationale for separation" by his own group from an opposing group. The "social function" of what Paul has to say is hermaneutically prior in an interpretation of Paul that denies a theological and existential reading of his letter.[70] Collective issues are thus once again very much to the fore in this reading of these verses.

As one might expect, Stendahl's interpretation of vv. 16–17 of Romans 1 also focuses on collective and cosmic issues, as opposed

[69] F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 102–105, 177–81.
[70] F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 178.

to more personal ones. For him, Romans is about "the mysterious ways in which God works in the cosmos and in history",[71] and is anxious that we do not translate Paul's "macro-theology" into a micro-theology of pastoral counselling. So, for Stendahl, the issue of the relation between the Gentile Christians and the Jewish community far outweighs any Pauline concern with personal issues of guilt or a plagued conscience. In Rom. 1:16–17, then, Stendahl's discussion of the "righteousness of God" and the righteous living by faith is focused entirely on the cosmic and eschatological hope of God bringing justice to the world. God's justice, again, is all about his impartiality, offering his salvation blessings to all peoples, regardless of race. Stendahl sees the argument of Romans as being concerned with such macro-themes as the mess the whole world is in, the equal responsibility of all peoples and how God's action to bring consummation and redemption could include the Gentiles. He resolutely refuses, then, to allow a personal interpretation of these verses—the righteousness of God, Stendahl says is "not just the soul game" and "the righteous will live by faith" refers only to a future righting by God of the whole cosmos.[72] The righteousness of God means "the righting of all things" and is universal and cosmic in its outworking, and cannot be confined to the individual. While Stendahl correctly points to a more comprehensive understanding of what Paul has in mind here, one gets the sense that he wants to leave all application to the individual behind—Stendahl's comment at the end of his chapter which discusses the first three chapters of Romans is, "woe unto you, says Paul, if you assign that pattern of thinking to individual living. Such thinking is a macro model, but it cannot be applied on the micro level".[73] Stendahl, then, steers us very deliberately away from a personal and individual application of Paul's talk about the gospel, salvation and the righteousness of God.

Minear's treatment of Romans was an early attempt to view the letter as in the light of the social setting of the Roman church.[74] Minear, as we have seen, locates five separate groups (two "strong in faith", two "weak in faith" and a group of doubters) among the

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[71] K. Stendahl, *Final Account, Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1995), 20.

[72] K. Stendahl, *Final Account, Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 16–17.

[73] K. Stendahl, *Final Account, Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 20.

[74] P.S. Minear, *The Obedience of Faith: The Purpose of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans.*

Christians at Rome and suggests that Paul wrote individual sections of his letter directed at each group in turn, with the purpose of reconciling the various factions. In his discussion of verse 16 of Romans 1, Minear focuses on the words "power" and "faith" which he claims had direct relevance to the factions in Rome. By concentrating on God's power, as opposed to the power of any one group, and on the universal availability of faith, Paul is able to offer a means of reconciliation to the sectarian groupings. Salvation came from God's power, irrespective of who was "strong" or "weak", through faith, no matter how little or much any group displayed. Minear thus views vv. 16 and 17 as an announcement of "the case to be argued", which is "clinched", as far as the Roman house churches are concerned, in chs. 14 and 15.[75] Minear's attempt to recreate the situation in Rome (which is ultimately flawed) is one of the first to produce a sociological reading of the text, where the interpretation of Paul's argument revolves around the resolution of group conflict.

Individualist Interpretations

What we have seen in recent years, then, in the re-evaluation of Romans, as a result of the Sanders' work and a renewed emphasis on the Jewish and covenantal background to Paul, is that the emphasis is now much more heavily on collective issues, on how groups of people, in particular Jews and Gentiles, fit into the eschatological purposes of God. As we have seen with the writers reviewed above, this is evident from their approach to Rom. 1:16 and 17, which in many ways are a summary of, or introduction to, the letter's main themes. So now salvation is seen in cosmic and eschatological terms; the righteousness of God is the impartiality of God to all people groups; and the gospel is the message which is designed to address conflict between groups, such as in the current situation of the Romans. Such an approach is to be expected, given the influence on New Testament studies in recent years by the social sciences, which, as we have seen,[76] believes implicitly in the determining power of the social. Yet our discussion in Part I about the nature of the self, the individuality that was a part of life in the

[75] P.S. Minear, *The Obedience of Faith*, 43.
[76] See Chapter 2.

Hellenistic world and the importance of an individual's relationship with God within Judaism alerts us to the possibility that the collective issues in the gospel which Paul introduces us to in vv. 16 and 17 are not the whole story.

As Paul formulated his approach to the social context in Rome out of both his Judaic culture and his own on-going experience, it is inconceivable that he had not the individual firmly in mind, as the key elements within the larger groups that they made up and which categorised them. Paul was doubtless concerned with how groups—Jews and Gentiles—participated in what God was doing in the world—indeed it was a issue of the utmost importance—but it is important not to allow a reaction against excess individualism in our own world to blind us to the recognition of individuality as a important element in the sense of self in a first century person like Paul.[77] Paul was concerned with personal matters pertaining to the individual; the participation of the individual in God's purposes was of vital import to him and his writings indicate this. The contention here is that in vv. 16 and 17 of Romans 1, we are introduced very clearly to the individual soteriological concerns of Paul.

Dodd is one writer who wants to maintain an emphasis on the faith of the individual in this text.[78] In his reply to Campbell's exposition of Rom. 1:17, Dodd wants to hold on to the importance of the "act of believing" and demonstrates with reference to a number of other Pauline texts that "Paul does indeed conceive of the believer putting faith in Christ" and that Paul's "'thought world' includes an anthropological understanding of 'faith in Christ'".[79] Dodd does not want to deny the possible reference to "Christ's faithfulness" in the ἐκ πίστεως of Rom. 1:17, but feels it is necessary to hold together the "two emphases that are found unmistakably in Paul's text: Christ's faithfulness and the believer's responding trust in Christ and the gospel".[80] For Dodd, the faithfulness of Christ is the ground of soteriology while the believer's trust is the necessary existential means of appropriating of this soteriology. In this interpretation, the faith of the individual takes a central role.

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[77] See Conclusion to Part I, 86–87.

[78] B. Dodd, "Romans: 1:17—A Crux Interpretum for the ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΗΡΙΣΤΟΥ Debate?", *JBL* 114 (1995) 470–73.

[79] B. Dodd, "Romans: 1:17", 472.

[80] B. Dodd, "Romans: 1:17", 473.

Also in contrast to writers who prefer a more corporate and less individualistic approach to the matters being introduced by Paul in these verses, Dunn is able to accommodate both aspects. Like others, Dunn sees the phrase "for the Jew first . . ." as being "programmatic for the whole letter",[81] in that the letter serves importantly as a reminder to its Gentile readership of Jewish prerogative in the purposes of God, and he insists that the relationship between Jew and Gentile is absolutely to the forefront and fundamental to how Paul understands the gospel. Yet Dunn does not deny the relevance of Paul's thinking to the individual. He comments, for example, on the phrase παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι (v. 16)—i.e. "to all who believe and go on believing"—and uses individualistic-sounding language about people coming to a "decision of faith" and about their lives being "characterised as a trustful acceptance of and commitment to the gospel".[82] Furthermore, Dunn puts a quite personal slant on Paul's use of πίστις in the verses, which he understands to have a "particularly Christian force", which gives it the sense of "trust in and total reliance upon God".[83] Dunn thus combines an interpretation which gives full recognition to Paul's concerns in Romans about Gentile arrogance in the context of the ongoing debate about how both Jews and Gentiles fit together in God's purposes along with a more traditional emphasis on the issue of personal justification by faith.

This would seem the only proper approach to do justice to the text. Paul's concern in Romans, as we have seen, is to address a concrete situation by outlining his understanding of the gospel, which centred on the faithfulness of the covenant God who had acted righteously in the person of Christ to bring final salvation to not only Jews, but Gentiles as well. We are confronted with Paul's understanding of the gospel and his concern with these "macro" themes in the earlier verses of chapter one, but when we reach vv. 16 and 17, Paul moves his discussion of salvation from the realm of ethnicity to the realm of personal response.

As Wright has pointed out, these verses presuppose and hark back to "the gospel", which was stated in 1:3–4,[84] and which could well be said to be the theme of Romans. Right at the beginning of the

[81] J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 47.
[82] J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 47.
[83] J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 46.
[84] N.T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul", 64.

letter, Paul sets out clearly the gospel as the purpose of his apostleship (v. 1), and in the following verses (2–5), we are given an explicit statement by Paul as to the gospel's content. This concerns pre-eminently the Son of God, Jesus the Messiah. For Paul, the gospel is all about the incarnation of the Son, his royal descent and Messiahship, and his clear vindication by God through the resurrection, which resulted in his Lordship (vv. 2–4). The proclamation of this gospel calls people to the "obedience of faith" (v. 5), and Paul sees his own calling as being primarily concerned with how this relates to the Gentiles. For Paul, the royal proclamation of the Messiah's Lordship was as much applicable to the Gentiles as it was to the Jews, and it was to the Gentiles that he himself had been called. The gospel, then, revolved around the very Jewish message of the fulfilment of the covenant promises[85] of Israel's God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah, to the end of calling all human groups, no matter what their racial background to allegiance to the Messiah, resulting in salvation.[86]

It is this gospel that Paul is determined to preach in Rome (v. 15)—after all, it is his calling and job (v. 9), and he is eager to see if he can be of some benefit to the Roman church (v. 13). This gospel, then—this royal proclamation of Israel's Messiah, is, he believes, the instrument of God's power to bring salvation to all those who believe in, or trust, or are faithful to God's exalted Messiah—i.e. all those who become faithful followers of Jesus, in recognition of the truth of what God has done through him, become partakers of God's salvation. This salvation is available to both Jew and Gentile—"to the Jew first" because the gospel came through Israel (v. 2—it was "promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures"), but also, *importantly*, as far as Paul is concerned, to the Gentiles.[87]

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[85] Paul relates the gospel directly to the promises of God in the Jewish scriptures in verse 2.

[86] N.T. Wright puts forward a very convincing covenantal understanding of gospel in "Romans and the Theology of God", Hays & Johnson (eds.), 30–67; also in *What St Paul Really Said* (Oxford, Lion, 1997), 39–62.

[87] D.J.-S. Chae, *Paul as Apostle to the Gentiles*, Chae contends strongly that it is Paul's self-awareness of being an apostle to the Gentiles that has in fact determined the shape and content of his soteriological argument in Romans. Paul's purpose is to demonstrate the equality of Gentiles with Jews in the people of God and to establish firmly the legitimacy of their justification.

The message about the coming, the death and the exaltation of the Messiah was a wholly Jewish one, but one that Paul believed fervently had a relevance beyond the bounds of Israel—in fact, a message that embraced all peoples. And, of course, not only did the message reach out to the Gentiles, but it embraced them without the need for them to conform to Jewish ethnic requirements. For Paul, the only requirement for experiencing the power of God in salvation was faith. This, de facto, required a response on the part of the individual to the message.[88] Paul in verse 16 makes his criteria for participating in the people of God something other than birth or conformance to ethnic practices. For both Jew and Gentile alike, it was on the basis of individually exercised faith. A person found salvation and inclusion in God's people on the basis of his or her response to the proclamation of the message about God's action in the world in the person of the Jewish Messiah. This response began with belief about the significance of the Messiah, Jesus' life and death, but consisted importantly of a life commitment to the ways of the Messiah and his people. More will be explored about the essence of Paul's meaning regarding faith in the discussion in chapter 8. For now we simply note that it is faith that Paul makes his criteria for participation in salvation, and that this points us towards recognising the inward, cognitive[89] activity in those, both Jew and Gentile who became part of the Christian group to whom he was writing. For someone to have become part of the Christian community, they had to make personal decisions and to exercise personal faith—they had to decide to believe the message about Jesus, and they had to decide to follow the Christian way, through an initiation of baptism and an on-going lifestyle that conformed ethically to

[88] M.A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 211– 219, in his discussion of verse 16 and 17 suggests that Paul's claim about the gospel transcending social and religious distinctions was based on the fact that the gospel met a universal need for salvation. Paul's focus here is soteriology rather than Jew-Gentile relations. For Siefrid, δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ is to be interpreted forensically; it is a gift, and the means by which an individual becomes righteous. Paul here is concerned with an individual salvation which is available to everyone, regardless of background, based on righteousness mediated through faith.

[89] I use the term "cognitive" not simply to mean internal, thinking behaviour; rather it refers to mental activity in individual brains which includes thinking, emotion, deliberation and initiation of action. Thus, whilst faith should be thought of as cognitive activity, associated with individual brains, this does not imply that it is merely a matter of belief and thought.

the demands of the Christian group. There was, then, both a cognitive and emotional inner response on the part of an individual in order for them to become a part of, and remain within, the Christian group. This focus of Paul's on faith, then, points us clearly toward such issues, and indicates that these matters were never far away from the apostle's thinking. Paul is most certainly concerned with the relationship between Jews and Gentiles within the Christian church, and he is concerned with how Jewish the entry criteria need to be for Gentiles—but the very fact that it is faith alone that he makes his criterion, means that anyone—παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι—can be a part of the Christian community, *if they choose to be.* This clearly highlights individual decision making, and personal, inner, religious feelings and thoughts.[90] These must have been a part of Paul's Christianity.

When Paul completes his sentence about those who share in God's salvation, by saying "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek", it serves two purposes. Firstly, it simply highlights that individuals from both groups can become participators in the new family of God through faith, and that there is no difference. Faith alone is the criterion. Secondly, it highlights the chronological importance of Israel in the history of salvation. Given the whole sense of what Paul is saying in these two verses about the defining importance of faith, he cannot here be giving some sort of preference to Jews. His comment here simply serves to remind his Gentile audience in Rome of the importance of Israel in the outworking of the purposes of God. It was through Israel that the Messiah came, and to the Jews that the gospel was first offered. This is emphasised in Paul's overall intent to counter Gentile superiority, but it would be against the overall thrust of his argument were we to interpret this phrase as reference to Jewish preference in terms of advantage in the purposes of God.[91]

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[90] E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 22, says in relation to verse 16, "The reference to 'every believer' shows that the interpretation by early history-of-religion research, that Paul never has the individual in mind, is wrong. Universalism and the most radical individuation are here two sides of the same coin". Käsemann has in mind here, for example, Wrede on Paul. W. Wrede, *Paul* (London, Philip Green, 1907), 113f., 132.

[91] This is essentially the line taken by Nanos who sees Paul's purpose in Romans as promoting the "obedience of faith" amongst Roman Gentiles—i.e. calling for a renewed commitment by Christian Gentiles to a Jewish programme of ethics and lifestyle. Nanos' Paul promotes a Law-observant gospel for Jews and a Law-respectful one for Gentiles, and is firmly committed to the glory of Israel, in which the Gentiles might share. Such a schema presupposes the priority of Israel. M. Nanos, *The Mystery*

Exegetes both pre and post Sanders have recognised here preference, but not advantage.[92]

So in verse 16, then, Paul has introduced a key element in his understanding of the gospel—the possible participation in the salvation wrought by God through his Messiah by anyone, whether part of Israel or not, on the grounds of faith. This logically points us to individual choice and inner motivation as key elements in Paul's gospel message, and towards recognising the value of the individual in Paul's worldview.

In the following verse, Paul goes on to substantiate his claim about faith being the ground of participation in the righteous people of God. In the gospel, he says, the righteousness of God—as we have seen, God's covenant faithfulness—is revealed to humanity. In other words, God's faithful, saving action on his people's behalf is seen pre-eminently in what he has done through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul elaborates on this thought further by saying ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν—God's righteousness is revealed *from* the faithfulness of God *to* the faith(fulness) of a human being.[93] God's righteousness is made known through the person and work of Christ to each of those who are faithful to Christ in response to God.[94] Once again we find Paul referring to what is a very individual and personal means for experiencing the reality of the righteousness of

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of Romans. Barth, too, saw advantage here for the Jews—although along the now outdated lines of the Jew-as-man-of-religion, who had the advantage when presented with the gospel over the irreligious man. K. Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 40.

[92] Käsemann, e.g. insists "we should not weaken the phrase by speaking of advantage rather than precedence. Paul gives Judaism precedence for the sake of the continuity of the plan of salvation". E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 23. Dunn sees here a simple categorisation of the world of the world, from a Jewish point of view, but points out the tension in Pauline thinking which allowed both Jewish priority and similar terms of salvation for both groups—a "double emphasis which is the driving force behind the whole epistle". J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 40. No advantage is allowed either by C.H. Dodd, 9, A. Nygren, 73, C.E.B. Cranfield, 90–91, or J.A. Fitzmyer, 257.

[93] So J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 44; K. Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 41. Many other commentators want to see the phrase "from faith to faith" as emphasizing the importance and primacy of faith—e.g. A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, 80; C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans I–VIII*, 99–100, J.A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 263.

[94] D.A. Campbell, "Romans 1:17", 277–281, prefers ἐκ πίστεως to refer specifically to Christ's faithfulness as opposed to simply God's faithfulness, on the grounds that it fits better with a proposed messianic interpretation by Paul of Hab. 2:4 and that the revelation of God's righteousness in the gospel revolves around Christ's obedience and obedient death.

God—faith. To conclude his argument at this point he then appeals to scripture—the sentence from Hab. 2:4. Much exegetical discussion has gone into the way in which Paul means to present this phrase to us—does he mean that the way a righteous person will live is through his faith, or is it that the person who is *righteous by faith* will live?[95] The grammatical features involved in the translation of this sentence have been ably dealt with by others,[96] and it is evident that ἐκ πίστεως can be linked either with δίκαιος or with ζήσεται. The LXX translation clearly favours connecting it with ζήσεται, but the thrust of what Paul is seeking to argue, seems to indicate the association with δίκαιος. As Hodge has said:

> The connection of ek pisteos with dikaios is certainly best suited to the apostle's object which is to show that righteousness is by faith, but in either construction, the sense is substantially the same; salvation is by faith.[97]

Paul has just argued that the righteousness of God is revealed through his act of faithfulness in Christ to those who have faith. His thinking here concerns the saving action of God on behalf of those who believe, and he appeals to the Habakkuk scripture for support.[98] The

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[95] For a clear presentation of the ancient sources for the Habakkuk quotation (the Romans occurrence, Heb. 10:38; the MT form in Habakkuk itself, and the LXX translation), and an analysis of the meaning of both the MT and LXX, on which Paul is dependent, see Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 44–46. Dunn discusses the options of reading ἐκ πίστεως with either ὁ δίκαιος or ζήσεται, and lists those commentators who opt for one or the other. Dunn himself comes to the conclusion that Paul follows traditional Jewish exegesis in wanting to broaden the meaning of the quotation as much as possible, and that he was deliberately ambiguous in the way in which he quotes the LXX, so as to allow both meanings. The Habakkuk quotation itself has clearly to do with the faithfulness of the righteous person—it occurs in the context of a discussion by the prophet of the punishment of Israel by foreigners and the question of Yahweh's fidelity to the covenant, and Habakkuk reiterates the conditions under which the Judeans may experience God's blessing—by living faithfully (cf. J.M. Scott, "A New Approach to; 17 Habakkuk II 4–5A", *Vetus Testamentum* 35, 3 (1985), 330–340; R.M. Moody, "The Habakkuk Quotation in Romans 1:17", *Expository Times* 92,7 (1981), 205–208; J.A. Emerton, "The Textual and Linguistic Problems of Habakkuk II 4–5", *Journal of Theological Studies* 28, 1 (1977), 1–18.

[96] E.g. W.B. Wallis, "The Translation of Romans 1:17—A Basic Motif in Paulinism," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 16 (1973), 22f.

[97] C. Hodge, *Epistle to the Romans* (reprint; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1950), 32.

[98] D.A. Campbell, "Romans 1:17", takes the minority view that Paul sees in Hab. 2:4 a messianic text, so that Christ himself is ὁ δῶκαιος. For Campbell, Paul uses the Habakkuk reference in this way as direct support for his previous statement that the righteousness of God is revealed through Christ's faithfulness.

sense of ζήσεται here, given this context, must be eschatological—God's faithful action on behalf of those who appeal to him in faith is to bring salvation and life. Paul takes the Habakkuk phrase, then, and turns its meaning slightly from the Hebrew original—here it clearly carries the sense of living faithfully to Yahweh.[99] As the first half of the verse shows, however, Paul is concerned with the eschatological salvation of the believer, and wants his scripture quotation to echo this. It is the salvation-life which God's righteous action brings that Paul has in mind here. And for Paul, that life is attained by those who are righteous, and their righteousness comes only by faith. So, it is those who are righteous by faith who will experience God's life and salvation. This is the interpretation which best fits the thrust of Paul's thinking and argument in this passage.[100] Dockery argues, supportively, that:

> (1) the immediate context (2) the structure of the epistle along with (3) the connection of righteousness with faith in Rom. 5:1 indicate that ek pisteos is almost certainly to be connected with ho dikaios rather than zesetai[101]

That being the case, again the relation and importance of all this to the individual must be asserted. Paul is talking about the salvation of the righteous—those who are counted part of the covenant community. Their righteous status comes by virtue of their faith—and this is clearly the whole thrust of Paul's emphasis here—which places the focus very much on the individual and her response to what God has been doing in Christ. To be sure, Paul is thinking is terms of the righteous community; he is thinking is terms of how

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[99] P. Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, 29, says that "Paul reads the prophetic text in the light of the revelation of Christ, but does not distort it . . . The apostle . . . offers, as it were, the summation of both textual versions [i.e. the LXX and the Hebrew] and states that it stands written as God's will (in Habakkuk) that the one who is righteous before God on the basis of faith . . . shall live".

[100] So RSV, C.K. Barrett, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 31; M. Black, *Romans* (London, Marshall, Morgan, Scott, 1973; 2nd ed. 1989), 35–38; B. Byrne, *Reckoning with Romans: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Gospel*, GNS 18 (Wilmington, Glazier, 1986); C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans I–VII*, 95–100; A. Feuillet, "La Citation d'Habacuc ii.4 et les huit premiers chapitres de l'epître aux Romains", *New Testament Studies* 6 (1959–60), 52–80; E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 31, 32; A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, 81–92; P. Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 29.

[101] D.S. Dockery, "The Use of Hab. 2:4 in Rom. 1:17: Some Hermeneutical and Theological Considerations", *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22 2 (1987), 24–36.

Jews and Greeks participate together in that community; he is thinking in Jewish covenantal ways—but it is important not to miss the fact that his emphasis on faith to which we are introduced in these verses in Romans makes it clear to us that for Paul, salvation did not only encompass the cosmos, or the covenant people of God, but also the individual, who, no matter what his or her ethnic background, could participate fully in the people of God and experience God's eschatological life.

Conclusion

Verses 16 and 17 of Romans 1 are rightly viewed as the introduction to the theme of the letter—how God's righteousness has been revealed to the end of the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles who will respond to God in faith. When the Old Testament background to Paul's righteousness language, which is important in Romans, and which appears in these verses, is examined, a much more relational meaning is revealed. Thus recent scholarship has found "God's righteousness" to have the sense of God's saving faithfulness; righteousness to have the sense of "covenant faithfulness" and thus "covenant membership or status"; and justification to refer to the righteous judgement of God on behalf of his people. Righteousness in the context of Second Temple Judaism can be seen to have taken on a sectarian sense, with a particular Jewish sect feeling itself to be the true, "righteous" group in an exclusive way. Paul's usage of righteousness and justification language is commonly now viewed as reflecting these sort of meanings.

Thus a strongly covenantal background to these verses is often assumed, where the gospel is the proclamation of the saving faithfulness of God exercised through Christ to vindicate his people—those, both Jew and Gentile, who have responded in faith to him. With these ideas to the fore, the collective aspects of the gospel—how it relates to people groups, God's impartiality with respect to these groups, and how the people of God are defined, over against other groups—take on a great deal of importance, and a number of writers highlight Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον και Ἕλληνι as the key element of these verses, and, indeed, the letter.

For some scholars, this is now the primary emphasis to be seen in Paul's gospel, and Romans revolves around issues of communal

identity and Paul's explanation of the universal and cosmic effects of God's saving action. Verses 16 and 17 of Romans 1 thus point to the issues of Jew-Gentile integration within the new people of God and how this people is to be defined as a group (by faith), both of which Paul will explore in more detail as the letter unfolds.

A recognition of the relational aspects of Paul's righteousness language which does justice to its Old Testament heritage, however, need not push us to the conclusion that Paul's gospel was unconcerned with the individual and his personal salvation. The defining criterion of the new community of "faith" of necessity puts the spotlight firmly on the individual. Faith implies a personal, cognitive response on the part of individuals, and necessitates individual and deliberate choice. Individuals from both Jew and Gentile groups can now be members of God's people—can now attain "righteous" status—through the faithfulness of God, demonstrated in Christ, through their faith in Christ. This is essentially the meaning of δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰσ πίστιν. The thrust of Paul's argument is summed up in the quotation from Habbakuk, which as we have seen, links δίκαιος with ἐκ πίστεως, where Paul is emphasizing the fact that it is those who are counted part of the righteous community by virtue of their faith response to God, who will experience eschatological life and salvation. This essentially is the theme which Paul explores in more detail throughout the early chapters of Romans, and which is introduced in vv. 16 and 17. The salvation of the individual as a key element in the gospel, we see, is very much in Paul's mind, notwithstanding the covenantal background of his thought and the overarching concern with the relationship between Jews and Gentiles.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE NATURE OF FAITH: ROMANS 3:21–28

Introduction and Context

From Rom. 1:18 through to the end of chapter 3, Paul explores aspects of the argument he began in vv. 16 and 17 of ch. 1. Here he stated the possibility of salvation for Gentiles as well as Jews through the power of God at work in the gospel of Jesus Christ, made effective for everyone, irrespective of ethnic background, through faith. In the last section of chapter 1, and in chapters 2 and 3, Paul discusses the universal need of both Gentiles and Jews of salvation because of sin and the universal inability to be obedient to God (3:9–18; 23). This marks the first, necessary stage in his argument—a statement of universal solidarity in the circumstances which make God's righteousness and salvation necessary. He establishes for his readership clearly, then, that there is a universal need of salvation.[1] His contention, of course is that that there is but one means of salvation for Jew and Gentile alike—through God's action in Christ. This is fundamental to Paul's understanding of the gospel—that the righteous, saving, faithful God of Israel has acted decisively through Christ to bring salvation, and this is quite explicit in Paul's statements in 1:1–5; 16, 17; 3:21–26. What Paul now wants to establish in his argument is that there is one means of access to this salvation—through faith. Clearly if God is One, and the creator and God of all humankind, then his salvation cannot be restricted to one small part of the human race—the Jews. This being the case, then the means of salvation cannot revolve around allegiance to a very specific code which relates to one ethnic group. The Jewish Torah, then, it is Paul's contention, cannot be the means of experiencing God's sal-

[1] M.A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 219. "Paul's claim for the relevance of the Gospel is predicated upon a universal need for salvation." Seifrid argues, and is surely right, that Paul's purpose in Rom 1:18–3:20 is "to establish that a universal need for salvation exists, and that salvation is available through the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel."

vation and participating in the righteous people of God. That faith, and specifically faith in Jesus Christ, is the grounds for justification—i.e. being counted as part of the righteous people of God—has already been mentioned by Paul but he now goes on to explore it in more detail and to cement his argument, particularly as his discourse continues in chapter 4.

Paul is here very much concerned with the issue at stake in the Christian communities of his day—the relation between Jews and Gentiles and the grounds for participation in the people of God. Observance of specifically Jewish Torah practice would restrict such participation to members of Israel by birth, or to those Gentiles willing to become Jewish proselytes. The gospel, according to Paul, however, had a much wider appeal, and Paul maintained that faith, as opposed to Law-observance, was the key identifying mark of the people of God. Those who would be vindicated by God in the last day, then, were those who were marked by faith in Jesus Christ, rather than those who kept the Jewish Law. Justification by faith, then, as opposed to justification by works (of the Law).[2] Who the people of God are, and the grounds for such collective identification are the major issues that Paul is dealing with in the discussion we have in Romans, which as we have seen, served partly to set out his understanding of the gospel for the sake of a congregation he had not yet met, and whose help he wanted to enlist for his future missionary plans.

The individual aspect of all this, however, and the necessary personal application could never have been far away from Paul's mind. Faith may have been for Paul an identifying characteristic of the new people of God, but the notion of faith itself, as we shall see, carries with it deeply personal overtones in its Jewish background.

Faith in the Old Testament and Judaism

When we begin to examine the meaning of faith in Hebrew tradition, we cannot escape the fact that it operates primarily at a personal and individual level. Faith might be said to be a defining characteristic of God's people and thus to carry with it an important sense

[2] N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 334–338.

of collective identity, but it is hard to minimise the importance of faith for the individual in the Hebrew scriptures.

The Hebrew root for the faith group of words is אמן with the sense of "firmness" or "stability". Used in the Hiph'il form of the verb, it is normally translated "believe" or "trust", and is very often used with a ב or a ל i.e. to trust in. In such usage, there was an implied relationship, which was ultimately personal, and the phrase is often used to refer to an individual's trust in God (Gen. 15:6; Ps. 78:22; Isa. 43:10). The two nouns אמן and אמונה which derive from this root give the sense of "firmness" or "faithfulness" and refer both to God or to the human response to God (Ps. 25:5; 26:3; Dan. 9:13; Jer. 7:28; Hab. 2:4).[3]

The conception in the Hebrew scriptures of faith, then, seems to be a recognition of God as creator and the one, true God, a recognition that gives rise to a response of penitence, obedience and faithfulness to his will and requirements. It is not the acceptance of ideas or dogmas about God or a set of beliefs; it is rather a moral response springing from a person's will, arising from a deep-seated trust and confidence in God. Of absolute necessity, this works first and foremost on the level of the individual Israelite who had the opportunity to makes his or her own response of loyalty to Yahweh. The Hebrew bible's narratives, which, admittedly, tell the collective story, nevertheless focus on individuals who make choices for good or evil, and who choose to obey or disobey God. Israel's story is composed of the story of individuals who had the opportunity to exercise faith in Israel's God or not.

In the Hebrew scriptures, Israel's God is the one who is faithful, loyal and trustworthy and who demands in return a response of faithfulness and trust by his people in his action on their behalf. This is very much the theme of, in particular, the Deuteronomic literature in the Old Testament. Covenantal theology, with its emphasis on the indisputable faithfulness of God and the required response of loyalty from those to whom he had committed himself, lies at the heart of most of the Hebrew scriptures.[4] In such a setting, faith was

[3] E.C. Blackman, "Faith, Faithfulness", *Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, 2.222–34.

[4] D. Cohn-Sherbok and S. Bigger, "Covenant and Law", in S. Bigger (ed.), *Creating the Old Testament: The Emergence of the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1989), 135–48.

the ideal response to God's prior calling and grace, consisting of trust and confidence in God and grateful obedience to God's requirements.[5]

Of particular importance to Jewish writers and, indeed, to Paul, as chapter 4 of Romans indicates, was the example of Abraham in Genesis 12:1–4, where Abraham typifies the confident trust in God's promises that is the ideal response. Abraham's confidence that God would fulfil his promises led him to obey what God had asked him to do. Trust and obedience were two sides of the one coin of faith.[6] Faith in Hebrew tradition, then, was something active, impossible to define systematically and categorise, and always worked out in the obedience that was a part of relationship to God.[7] It was such faith that was to be the qualification for participating in the people of God—for being counted part of the righteous community—as Gen. 15: 6 indicates. And such faith was rooted and grounded in God's initiative, promises and faithfulness, as is evident in the Abraham story—Abraham acts in this ideal manner, but only in response to God's deliberate choice to seek Abraham out and reveal himself to him.

So faith in Jewish tradition is a characteristic of God's own people, engendered by God's prior grace and faithful love. Wright, in discussing the Jewish conception of faith, points to a number of Hebrew scriptures—Isa. 7:9; 28:16; 30:15; Hab. 2:4—to make the point that in the last analysis, in the great day of judgement, the people of Yahweh will be marked out by their faith—"faith is not a religious virtue or attribute. Rather it is a distinguishing mark of the true people of Yahweh".[8] For Israel, faith in her God was critical to her

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[5] G.N. Davies, *Faith and Obedience in Romans: A Study in Romans 1–4*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Sup 39 (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1990), 173.

[6] D.B. Garlington, "The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans: Part I: The Meaning of ὑπακοή πίστεως (Rom. 1:5; 16:26)", *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990), 201–224. "In the OT and later Judaism faith and obedience are virtually synonymous . . . "faith" in the Hebrew Bible is two-sided: trust *and* a commitment (to the covenant) resultant from trust", 209; E. Perry, "The Meaning of *emuna* in the Old Testament," *Journal of Bible and Religion* 21 (1953) 255–56—"the Old Testament does not set trust and obedience in contrast to each other as separate ways of satisfying the demands of God"; D. Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meaning* (SNTSMS 5; Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1967), 145 n. 1. "Judaism has really no place for a rigid distinction between faith and works: faith can really only exist when it is embodied in works".

[7] G. Fohrer, *Glauben und Leben in Judentum* (2nd edn.; Heidelberg, Quelle & Meyer, 1985), 159.

[8] N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1996), 259.

self-definition at the moment of crisis.[9] This is entirely tied up with the sense that Israel had of special calling by God, and it was the nation's relationship with Yahweh—the one, true, creator God—which essentially defined her. Hence a proper response to—i.e. faith in—that God was critical to what Israel actually was.

Hence Wright makes the observation that faith for Israel was not to be understood "simply in terms of religious interiority", and that our twentieth century question about the role of faith within religious experience was not a vital question for Jews within the world of first century Judaism.[10] Faith concerned the nation's relationship to the creator God and defined it over against the other pagan nations whom Yahweh had not chosen to be his righteous people. Of necessity, then, it entailed a certain way of life which was perceived to be in accordance with Yahweh's requirements for the nation, and which served to distinguish it from other groups. Faith, then, for Israel, can be said, in a sociological sense, to operate at a corporate level—and it is certainly true that our modern individualistic and intellectual sense of belief is not to the fore in the Hebrew scriptures.

A recognition of the sociological reality of faith within Israel, however—its rôle in establishing a collective identity as the people of Yahweh—should not distract us from seeing the necessary operation of faith at the level of the individual. Faith in the Hebrew tradition was also an intensely personal experience on the part of the individual who needed rescue, salvation or refuge by his God.[11] This is very evident in the Psalms, which although used in corporate worship, deal at times with very personal issues and are expressed in very personal terms e.g. Psalms 42; 46; 51; 63; 84; 96; 102–3; 116; 118; 121; 139; 145.[12] Furthermore, the narratives of the patriarchs

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[9] Wright quotes a number of post-biblical Jewish writings to illustrate this point: 1QpHab 2.1–7; 1QpHab 7.17–8.3; 4Q521 II.2.1–9; Wis. 3.9; T. Dan 5.13; 6.4; T.Ash. 7.6–7—N T Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 260, 261.

[10] N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 260, 261.

[11] See Chapter 5: "The Collective and the Individual in Judaism". Here I have explored the fact that both the individual and the collective were important in Hebrew tradition, and that the interiority of religion and personal piety became increasingly important in the inter-testamental period.

[12] R. Tomes, "The Psalms", in S. Bigger (ed.), *Creating the Old Testament*, 251–68. Tomes comments upon Psalms categorised as "individual laments" or "individual songs of thanksgiving", and suggests that, although treating the "I" in these Psalms as the personification of the community was once in vogue, it is much more likely to reflect genuine individual concerns (260, 261).

and the prophets of Israel, while they play their part in the overarching and unfolding story of the nation, portray for us individuals who made real, personal life choices on the basis of their beliefs, convictions and perceived relationship with Yahweh.

In the post-exilic period, faith seems increasingly to have been expressed through faithfulness to the Law—e.g. those who are noted as the "faithful" in both Daniel and Judith are the Law-observing (Dan 1:8; 6:10; Jud. 8:5–6; 11:17). As we move towards the first century CE, loyalty to the Hebrew traditions and observance of the Law became an intrinsic part of what faith in God meant.[13] In a situation of occupation in Palestine, and of living amongst Gentiles in the Diaspora, Jewish identity became increasingly important, and the practise of the Law, especially with respect to circumcision, diet and festivals[14] was essential in creating the boundary markers which separated Jew from Gentile and created a Jewish identity. Faith in God and faithfulness to God meant essentially being faithful to the demands of the Law which Israel's God had graciously given. Law keeping, then, was the way in which a Jew could express his faith in the God of his fathers and confirmed his place, like faithful Abraham, within the bounds of the righteous community. As Sanders has demonstrated, such Law-keeping did not imply some sort of attempt to gain God's favour—to a Jew, it was simply clearly the way in which faith in the One true God was to be expressed.[15]

Overall, then, the sense which emerges from the Hebrew scriptures and inter-testamental literature of faith is the idea of trust and confidence in God, Israel's saviour, expressed by faithful adherence to their God's requirements—which were enshrined in the demands of the Jewish Law. Faith was something very much bound up with the Jewish idea of covenant and was the totality of response of a grateful people to a faithful, loving creator God who had chosen

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[13] G.F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Century of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1927–30) 2.238. Moore comments of the first century CE—"fidelity to God was in Jewish thought inseparable from confidence in God". J. Pathrapankal, *Metanoia, Faith, Covenant: A study in Pauline Soteriology* (Bangalore, Dharmaram College, 1971), 77. "The obligation of the people to have faith in Yahweh was precisely an undertaking to remain faithful to the covenant". This is in contrast to D. Lührmann, "Pistis im Judentum", *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 64:19–38*, 26f., who sees "fidelity" as a virtue, which has to do with moralism.

[14] J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, lxxi.

[15] E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London, SCM, 1997).

them. Such a response encompassed fidelity in worship, confidence in the outworking of his plans for his people in the future, and obedience to his revealed will. The corporate flavour given to faith by Wright (see p. 152) is only one aspect of how we must understand it operating in Israel's history. It may be *observed* to mark out the people of God, particularly at time of crisis, as Wright has pointed out for us, and thus serve as a marker of corporate identity, but faith, by its very nature and definition, must be a matter for the individual. Response to God by a people operates first and foremost at the level of the individual—trust and confidence are mental, cognitive processes that originate in individual brains[16]—and faithful obedience is carried out by individuals as deliberate, wilful action. There are doubtless social influences at work within a group of people related by kinship, history and nationality—but as we have seen, these do not determine, they merely interact with pro-active individual agents whose combined actions may be observed to follow a similar pattern.[17] The covenantal idea of faith, then, while it may be observed at a collective level, and must not be thought of in a modern sense as a highly intellectualised set of personal beliefs, nevertheless does operate in a very individual sense. The calling of God in the lives of individuals from the patriarchs to the prophets, and the expressions of faith in the Psalms all witness to the personal aspect of faith which was part of Israel's heritage. This, of course, was part of the inheritance of Paul the ex-Pharisee.

The Meaning of Faith for Paul

A covenantal understanding of faith was essential to Paul's sense of the idea. As a Jew and ex-Pharisee, as we have seen, the covenant informed his world-view and his conception of faith was rooted in the Hebrew scriptures. As Garlington points out, we never find Paul debating the meaning of faith with his opponents; he simply assumes the concept of his tradition.[18] And yet, it is likely that Paul's experience of Christ and his understanding of the significance of the Christ-event led him to alter the way in which he understood faith

[16] See Chapter 2, 27.
[17] See Chapter 2, 26, 27.
[18] D.B. Garlington, "The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans", 210.

to work in the life of the believer.[19] This new understanding left no role for the Jewish Law as part of a person's faithful response to God,[20] and was, thus, the cause of controversy with Jews and other Jewish Christians. So Paul's understanding of faith was at once traditional, and yet new—it is this that we shall explore as we examine the text of Rom. 3:21–28. Paul writes against a background of covenantal theology, exploring the relationship between Jews and

[19] To quote Garlington again, "What is radical about Paul, however, is *faith's object*—Christ", 211. A.F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: the Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990), 128f. points out that "no other Jews in the first century distinguish faith and law in the way Paul does". Rather faith and law-observance were intimately entwined in Judaism. Paul, significantly, sets the two in opposition. Faith previously for Paul meant faithful Torah observance, but Paul's experience of God's grace manifest to the Gentiles led him to a new model of the righteous community which focused, as before, on faith, but now left aside the Jewish Law as a necessary defining element. Faith then continued to be an essential element of the proper response to God for Paul, but it could no longer be thought of as being outworked through Law-obedience.

[20] In Galatians 3, Paul contrasts the "works of the Law" with faith (v. 5) and baldly states that "the Law is not of faith" in v. 12. The whole thrust of his argument in this chapter in Galatians is to make very clear the temporary nature of the Law, and that faith's focus now must be in Christ, as opposed to Torah (vv. 23—25). The Law, according to Paul, cannot give life—only faith in Christ can do this (v21). Romans 3 carries much of the same Law—faith antithesis. God's faithful action to his people is now revealed through "faith in Jesus Christ", "apart from the Law" (vv. 21, 22). Some authors feel the matter of the rôle of Torah for the believer in Paul's thinking is not so clear cut. Räisänan feels the whole issue is anomalous in Paul's thought, and that his various statements about the Law in Romans leave us without a clear view of whether the Law is still vital for the believer or not—H. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1986). The view of both Gager and Gaston is that Paul was not opposed to Torah observance as a means of justification for Israel, only to this as a means of including the Gentiles amongst God's people. Faith in Christ and Torah faithfulness were simply alternative means of justification for the two groups of people—L. Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1987); J.G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes towards Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1983). Most scholars, no matter how exactly they interpret the nature of Paul's opposition to the Law, recognise that he was opposed to it as the arena in which faith operated any more for the righteous. So, for example, D.L. Bartlett, *Romans*, 40, referring to "a right relationship with God", declares that it is Paul's view that "Torah can't do it". J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 165 refers to Romans 3:21 as describing the "eschatological turning point of history". J.A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 343ff. highlights the "period of humanity under the law" with the eschaton which began with Christ and his mission, in his discussion of Romans 3:21ff. D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 218—"faith was both the necessary and necessarily exclusive response of human beings to God's work of redemption". J. Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 44—"the Law plays no part in justification, in becoming acceptable to God as part of his people". So also older commentaries by C.E.B. Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans*, 201; C.H. Dodd, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 52; E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 93–94; A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, 149.

Gentiles within the purposes of God, yet at the same time, his concerns are soteriological—his understanding of the inadequacy of the Law as an expression of faith has led him to reach fundamental conclusions about the human condition in general, which are only addressed by what God has done through Christ and applied to an individual through faith. For Paul, then, the collective issues involved can in no way be divorced from the relevance of God's righteousness to the individual.

Who Are the Sinners?—Spotlight on the Individual

As we have explored earlier,[21] the sense of righteousness as "covenant status" for the various sectarian groups within Second Temple Judaism meant that those who adhered to the sect's behavioural requirements and stayed within the social and moral boundary markers associated with the group were judged to be the true Israel, the righteous ones, those within the covenant. Those who did not fit into this group—either Gentiles (necessarily)[22] or other Jews—were considered to be sinners.[23] Only by coming within the boundaries of the righteous group by virtue of faithful adherence to the sect's requirements—this group's understanding of Torah—could a sinner become righteous. Faith, in the sense of faithfulness, was a requirement of righteousness. And, correspondingly, lack of faith put one firmly in the camp of the "sinners".

Paul, then, in seeking to give a full explanation of his understanding of the gospel, starts by defining the category of "sinner".

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[21] See Chapter 7, 120–122.

[22] For a note on Jewish nationalistic distinctiveness, see B. Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant: A Comparison of 4 Ezra and Romans 1–11* (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1991), 27–31.

[23] J.D.G. Dunn, "Pharisees, Sinners and Jesus", in *Jesus, Paul and the Law* (London, SPCK, 1990), 61–88. Dunn represents the Pharisees as a sect which exhibited a special zeal for the Law and to whom those other Jews with different ideas about what constituted covenant loyalty would have been thought of as "sinners". He notes other such Jewish polemic in 1 Maccabees 1:34; 2:44, 48 where apostate Jews are referred to as "sinners and lawless men"; in Jubilees 6:32–5; 23:16, 26 where disagreement about the Jewish calendar put opponents in the same category as Gentile sinners; in 1 Enoch 1–5, where again a calendrical factional dispute condemns those Jews who practised their Judaism differently; in the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g. CD 1.13–21; 1QS 2.4–5; 1QH 2.8–19; 1QpHab 2.1–4; 5.3–8) where non-Essene (Jewish) opponents are denounced as transgressors; and in the Psalms of Solomon, where Hasmonean Sadducees who are the opponents of the devout are designated "sinners".

In the latter half of chapter one, he shows clearly how the Gentiles have failed to meet God's (and the Law's) moral requirements and as a race, have no hope of being considered part of God's righteous people. Such a viewpoint would have been common for a Jew of this time, no matter which variety of Judaism he belonged to.[24] In chapter 2, though, Paul goes on to put the entire race of Jews in precisely the same category! His argument is that, although the Jews have been privileged with God's Law, they have not been obedient to it. *Having* the Law, Paul insists, is no guarantee of covenant status—only *doing* it counts in the end. He accuses his fellow countrymen of behaving in just the same way as the Gentiles—chapter 2: 3:9, 21, 22. God, he says, is not interested in who *has* the Law—but rather in who keeps its precepts, whether they be those privileged to have been given it or not (2:11–16). Paul's view clearly is that the Jews as a race have not kept the Law, and therefore fall into precisely the same category as the Gentiles—they are to be counted among the "sinners". He makes this explicit in verse 9 of chapter three:—προῃτιασάμεθα γὰρ Ἰουδαίους τε καὶ Ἕλληνας πάντας ὑφ' ἁμαρτίαν εἶναι—and goes on to back this claim up from a variety of quotations from the Psalms.

Paul's consideration of the question of who qualifies to be a member of the "righteous" (nobody!) thus leads him to the conclusion in verse 19 of chapter three, that all the world is ὑπόδικος . . . τῷ θεῷ and that οὐ γάρ ἐστιν διαστολή· πάντες γὰρ ἥμαρτον καί ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ (vv. 22, 23). Paul's covenantal theology, then, which is concerned with the question of who participates in God's people, very soon becomes soteriological in its nature, as he comes face to face with the reality of the culpability of every human being before God, and thus their need of salvation.[25] Paul's reasoning about who is "in" and who is "out" goes much further than a discussion of "boundary markers" designated by the Jewish Law. To be sure, Paul does want to allow for the option of non-Jews being accepted into the ranks of the righteous, and so of necessity has to discount

[24] E.g. Wisd. Sol 14: 25–25; 4 Macc. 1:26–27; 2 Enoch 10:4–5; 1QS 4:9–11; Philo *Sac.* 32.

[25] D. Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1994), 293. Boyarin questions Wright's approach to Pauline theology, which he feels concentrates too much on covenantal theology, as opposed to soteriology. Boyarin suggests that "somehow the two elements of covenantal theology and individual salvation . . . have to be integrated".

Torah as the definitive arbiter of covenant status, but his line of argument about the culpability of the two races, which puts Jews and Gentiles together "under sin", is about "something far more fundamental in the human condition".[26] That Paul spends so much time in Romans discussing the common condition of sinfulness of both Jews and Gentiles is surely indicative of this.

Both groups fall into the category of sinners. The Jews, despite their heritage and possession of their treasured Law, are no better off than the Gentiles. And the reason for this? Because, in Paul's words, "all have sinned"—Jews have been unable to keep the Law and so, like the Gentiles are held culpable. Paul stresses the individual nature of this culpability—his whole discussion in chapter two is about the irrelevance of mere possession of the Law (i.e. any ethnic privilege) and the importance of individual behaviour. Thus Paul insists that God ἀποδώσει ἑκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ (2:6ff.). The clear point is that sinning is done by individuals. (The list of Gentile sins in 1:29–31 and Jewish shortcomings in 2:21–22 include both actions which are mental in nature and thus clearly personal and actions committed by individuals as the result of individual choice).

Once Paul creates a level playing field, with both groups condemned as sinners, salvation of the individual begins to take on major importance. Because ethnic considerations have no bearing on the matter, and each individual on his own behalf is able to participate (or not) within the group of the righteous (through God's grace and faith), the spotlight falls on the individual and his or her own response to God. A focus on individual salvation becomes a necessary corollary of Paul's argument about covenant status.

Focus on Verses 21–23

21 Νυνὶ δὲ χωρὶς νόμου δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πεφανέρωται μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν,
22 δικαιοσύνη δὲ θεοῦ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας. οὐ γάρ ἐστιν διαστολή,
23 πάντες γὰρ ἥμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ

[26] B. Longenecker, "Contours of Covenantal Theology in the Post-Conversion Paul", in R.N. Longenecker (ed.), *The Road from Damascus: The Impact of Paul's Conversion on His Life, Thought and Ministry* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1997), 125–46 (143).

Having categorised the whole world, both Jews and Gentiles, as "sinners", and thus outside the covenant people of God, Paul now begins to turn to matters soteriological. All are sinners—all are subject to the justly deserved wrath of God (2:2, 5; 3:5), and are under the power of sin (a theme which Paul will later develop in some detail in chs. 6 and 7). And all are in need of action by Israel's Saviour-God, if any are to be justified, or vindicated. As we have discussed previously, although Paul lived in a less individualistic age than our own, and his ethnic community was quite collective in outlook, he nevertheless lived and worked in a Hellenistic world, which, as we have seen, had a growing sense of the importance of the self and individuality, and where there was a felt need amongst people of salvation of the self from deterministic powers.[27] In such a cultural milieu, it is not hard to believe that Paul's thinking (prompted by his covenantal theology) about who fitted into the category of "sinner", where he came to view everyone as under bondage to sin, served to provide a profound insight into the basic human condition—individuals enslaved to sin, and subject to the judgement of God. Individuals, in short, who needed God's salvation. How they could participate in this salvation—the righteousness of God—is made explicit by Paul in these verses. It clearly could not be through the practice of an exclusive ethnic code (v. 21 χωρὶς νόμου)—it is, rather, through something available to everyone—faith.

God's salvific action was realised through the faithful action of Jesus Christ (v. 22). πίστις Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ has been the subject of intense debate, and is often translated as "faith in Christ".[28] Many scholars, however, prefer to take the phrase as a subjective genitive—"the faith or faithfulness of Christ".[29] My own preference is for the

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[27] See Chapter 4, 62.

[28] E.g. Luther, *Lectures on Romans: Glosses and Scholia,* LuthW 25, transl. W.G. Tillmans & J.A.O. Preus (St. Louis, Concordia, 1972), Glossae 3.22; C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans,* 203; J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8,* 166; J.A. Fitzmyer, *Romans,* 345; E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans,* 94; D. Moo, *Romans,* 224–25.

[29] E.g. B. Byrne, *Reckoning with Romans: A contemporary reading of Paul's Gospel,* GNS 18 (Wilmington, Glazier, 1986), 79–80; R.B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11* (Chico, Scholars Press, 1983); M. Hooker, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΗΡΙΣΤΟΥ", *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989), 321–42; G Howard, "On the Faith of Christ", *Harvard Theological Review* 60 (1967), 459–65; L.T. Johnson, "Romans 3:21–26 and the Faith of Jesus", *CBQ 44* (1982), 77–90; B. Longenecker, "Defining the Faithful Character of the Covenant Community: Galatians 2.15–21 and Beyond." in J.D.G. Dunn (ed.), *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (Tübingen, Mohr-Siebeck,

latter, which highlights the faithful life of Christ as the focal point of God's righteous action towards his creation. With this translation Christ's life and work become the epitome of a faithful response to the covenant. Christ is the one who was able to respond to God in the perfectly faithful and loyal way which Israel failed to do. Israel's failure to keep the covenant was a familiar theme in Jewish theology, and has been highlighted by Paul throughout Rom. 2:17–3:20. Paul has examined both Jewish and Gentile behaviour and found it all failing to meet the covenant requirement of faithfulness to God (v. 23). Christ, however, lived up to the required standard, and was the one, perfect example of covenant faithfulness.

This follows the general thesis of Wright about the close association in Paul's thinking between Israel and the Messiah, which he has explored in some detail.[30] Wright's explanation of Pauline theology in Romans regards the covenant as the framework for Paul's thinking and argument. According to Wright, it was Paul's fundamental belief that,

> the creator god was also the covenant god, that the covenant with Israel was always intended as the means of setting the entire cosmos to rights, and that this intention had now in principle come true in Jesus and was being implemented by the Spirit.[31]

Paul, the first century Jew and ex-Pharisee, shared a fundamentally Jewish world-view, which revolved around the concepts of God and

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1996), 75–97. These interpreters typically appeal to Rom. 3:3—"the faithfulness of God", and 4:12, 16—"the faith of Abraham", as similar constructions where the meaning is clearly the faith of an individual, not faith *in* that individual. In Greek, a genitive following πίστις is usually subjective, making it likely, then, that Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is also a subjective genitive. Thus the translation is better linguistically, and seems to fit the context better. Furthermore it avoids Paul asserting twice the importance of human faith in the one phrase. Moo and others, however, do not find these arguments compelling, on the grounds that πίστις in Paul usually does not mean "faithfulness", and that Paul's consistent use of πίστις in 3:21–4:25 is for the faith exercised by believers. D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 225–26. The arguments are not conclusive on either side; it really depends on the interpretation given to the overall context of Paul's argument in these verses.

[30] This is the central thesis in N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, where he discusses a number of Pauline passages to make the case that the story of Israel has come to its climax in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah, that the covenant has been finally fulfilled, and that the people of God have been redefined in the person of Christ.

[31] N.T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul" in D.M. Hay & E.E. Johnson (eds.), *Pauline Theology Vol. III: Romans* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1995), 66.

the covenant.[32] The full blessing of the covenant, which included Israel becoming the source of blessing to the Gentiles (cf. Isa. 42:6–7; 43:10–21; 44:8; 49:6) and the beacon of divine glory (Isa. 49:3) could only be enjoyed when Israel responded properly to God's prior grace and calling.[33] It is Wright's view that in Paul's covenantal thinking, Jesus the Messiah became Israel's representative, and because of his perfect obedience, the conditions for covenant blessing were satisfied.[34] As Longenecker puts it, "in the faithful ministry of Jesus, Israel's commission has been fulfilled—salvation is now available to all people through the one who embodies the faithfulness expected of God's covenant people".[35]

Paul, then, in verse 22 writes from a covenantal perspective, which saw the covenant demands finally and completely fulfilled by the Messiah, Jesus, which meant that the covenant blessing of full salvation (God's righteousness) was now made manifest.[36] For Paul, to whom it is clear that there was only one person who fulfilled the covenant[37]—the Messiah, Jesus—it has also become evident that everyone else, whether from a Jewish or Gentile background, must of necessity be considered a sinner.[38] Only one person was himself

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[32] See Chapter 6, 110–111.

[33] N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 268–279. Here Wright traces to many early Judaic sources the idea that the eschatological dawn of a golden age of God's rule on earth would be brought about by a proper fulfilment of the covenant between God and Israel.

[34] N.T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul", 34. "the creator/covenant god has brought his covenant purpose for Israel to fruition *in Israel's representative, the Messiah, Jesus*" (emphasis Wright's).

[35] B. Longenecker, "Contours of Covenantal Theology in the Post-Conversion Paul", 134.

[36] That Paul's thought was moulded by the covenant is not shared by all scholars—Martyn, for example, believes that the gospel has no "linear pre-history", or no "salvific linearity prior to the advent of Christ", and suggests that "Paul . . . does not accept covenant as a term indicating a fundamental building block of . . . theology . . . this apostle is not a covenantal theologian". J.L. Martyn, "Events in Galatia: Modified Covenantal Nomism or God's Invasion of the Cosmos in the Singular Gospel: A Response to J.D.G. Dunn and B.R. Gaventa", in J.M. Bassler (ed.), *Pauline Theology, Vol. 1* (Minneapolis, Augsburg Fortress, 1991), 176, 179; M.A. Siefrid, *Justification by Faith*, 222, referring to verse 26b, sees Paul's talk about God justifying the one who has faith in Jesus as highly individualistic and as a "setting aside of the covenant", rather than covenantal.

[37] N.T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul", 37. "there must . . . be an Israel that is faithful to the covenant, so that through this Israel the creator/covenant god can deal with the evil of the world, and with its consequences".

[38] B. Longenecker, "Contours of Covenantal Theology in the Post-Conversion Paul", 139. "when the covenant boundaries are defined as exclusively encircling a

righteous—the rest, therefore, Jew and Gentile alike, are to be considered amongst the unrighteous. "πάντες γὰρ ἥμαρτον", says Paul in verse 23, "καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ".

As far as Paul was concerned, the covenantal response of faith—absolute trust and confidence in God, resulting in faithful and loyal obedience to all God's requirements—was only—could only have been, given the slavery of human beings to the power of sin (Rom. 6:6–8:11)—evident in one person. Therefore the means of a person being counted as part of the righteous people of God—being justified—could not have been through covenant faithfulness. This was only exhibited through Jesus. The only means of becoming one of the righteous was to participate in the righteousness of the One who had proved himself properly faithful to God.[39] And for Paul, the means of such participation was through faith,[40] in the sense of trust and confidence in the efficacy of this One's own faithfulness. Thus, in Dunn's words, Paul effectively "draws a wedge between the two senses of *pistis* (faith/faithfulness)".[41] Faith in Christ, in the sense of utter confidence and trust, is now the means of participation in the covenant people of God, as opposed to faithfulness to the Law.[42] "'Faith' consistently in Paul denotes unconditional trust in God alone".[43] Covenant fidelity has now been redefined by Paul by centring on Christ's faithfulness, and is appropriated and, indeed, replicated in their lives, by those who believe.[44]

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single individual, the category applicable to all others is that of a covenant outsider, or 'sinner'".

[39] Faith in Christ's covenant faithfulness is also stressed by Paul in Galatians 2:16b—"we have put our faith in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by the covenant faithfulness of Christ", and in Gal. 3:22, where God's promises are given to those that believe through the faithfulness of Christ.

[40] B.W. Longenecker, "Defining the Faithful Character of the Covenantal Community: Gal. 2: 15–21 and Beyond", in J.D.G. Dunn (ed.), *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (Tübingen, Mohr (Siebeck), 1996), 75–97. Longenecker views faith in Paul to relate to participation in Christ. "To be in Christ is to have his (and only his) faithfulness as the mark of one's own covenant fidelity", 82, 83.

[41] J.D.G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (London, A. & C. Black, 1993), 163. Dunn here is discussing Galatians 3:7, and the contrast between "those of faith" and "those of works of the law". Believing and trusting are the characteristics of the faithful, as opposed to adherence to the Jewish Law.

[42] J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 46. "For Paul the counterpart of God's faithfulness is not man's *faithfulness* (at any rate as understood within Judaism), but *faith*, his trust in and total reliance upon God."

[43] J.D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 312.

[44] B.W. Longenecker, "Defining the Faithful Character of the Covenantal Community", 83, 84. "Rom. 3:26 . . . appears to mean that the faithfulness of Christ,

We see, then, that, on the one hand, Paul is thinking in a very covenantal way—his logic regarding justification focuses on the need for faithfulness to the God of the covenant. But his understanding about what Christ has done, in perfectly fulfilling the covenant and taking the place of Israel, and the inability of anyone else, either Jew or Gentile to meet covenant demands, leads him to amend his understanding of covenant faith and the means of participation in the covenant, and indeed, his whole view about the scope of the covenant. So now, faith is nuanced to mean trust and confidence in the ability of Jesus the Messiah to have met the faithfulness-demands of the covenant perfectly. Participation in the covenant people of God is by means of such trust, as opposed to keeping the demands of the Law, and, as a result of this, the covenant can now be open to everyone, even if they are not Jewish.[45] The creator God is One—God of Jew and Gentile alike, and there are now no ethnic barriers to becoming a part of this God's righteous people. All that is required is trust in the efficacy of what Jesus has done.

(What came first, in Paul's mind—the realisation of what Christ had done in fulfilling the Law's demands in the place of Israel, and the subsequent realisation of human slavery to sin and inability to keep the Law, or an understanding of human failure followed by a new understanding of what the ultimate solution was in Christ, is not pertinent to my argument here, and perhaps is unresolvable.)[46]

Covenantal Theology Leads to a Soteriology of the Individual

Once we see where the logic of Paul's argument takes him, issues to do with personal soteriology and the individual begin to emerge as important. In passing, it is important to note the creativity of

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through which God's eschatological righteousness has broken into the world, is being replicated within the lives of those who believe, and only on that basis is a relationship of covenantal righteousness established".

[45] E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 101. In his discussion of faith in this passage, Käsemann notes how Paul's understanding of the divine covenant has been modified. "God's righteousness reaches beyond the covenant people and is valid for everyone who believes in Jesus the Crucified. Indirectly this says that God's covenant faithfulness becomes his faithfulness to his whole creation . . . The salvation history of the old covenant moves out into the broader dimension of world history."

[46] E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1977), 442f.

Paul's own thinking, that he is not a slave to his own culture. His culture and tradition form the backdrop to his thinking and are seminal influences for him, but he is free to think individually and creatively,[47] amending his culture in the light of his own experience of the living Christ at Damascus and of the Gentile world in which he lived and ministered.[48] He had come to experience Jesus Christ as a personal, living reality, and so his thinking about the covenant and how to and who could participate in it had changed. His work amongst pagans had brought him face to face with pagan sin and human bondage and the relevance of the gospel to individual lives must have become an issue for him.[49] As he considered all this, then, his covenantal thinking about God and his purposes was adapted, and began to reflect, amongst other things, concerns about the soteriology of the individual.

I have already suggested that the way in which Paul's sense of universal participation in, indeed, slavery to, sin led him must have led him to think in broad anthropological terms as well as in covenantal terms. Once Christ is seen as the only righteous one, everyone else is seen as outside the covenant, a sinner, (Jew as well as Gentile).[50] There can be no place for faithfulness to the Law as the means of justification, and in any case, it is evident that Israel has never managed to fulfil her obligation of Torah faithfulness. Jews are in exactly

[47] See Chapter 2, 24, 25.

[48] W.S. Campbell, "The Contribution of Traditions to Paul's Theology: A Response to C.J. Roetzel" in D.M. Hay (ed.), *Pauline Theology Vol. II: 1 & 2 Corinthians* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1993), 234–54, 254. Campbell refers to Paul creatively reformulating and transforming the inherited images and metaphors of his tradition.

[49] For more discussion of the Hellenistic influence on Paul as a result of his ministry amongst Gentiles in the Hellenistic cities of the first century, see chapter 6; see also "Religion in the Hellenistic World", in chapter 4, and "The Effects of Hellenism on Judaism", in chapter 5. I have previously highlighted the newly emerging sense of individualism in the Hellenistic world which Paul would have encountered, the psychological-religious needs which were characteristic of this uncertain and rapidly-changing age, and the encounter between Judaism and Hellenism which produced the "discovery of the individual before God". All this must have had its effect on the way in which Paul began to interpret his tradition.

[50] B. Longenecker, "Contours of Covenant Theology", 138, 139. Longenecker takes the view that for Paul, the embodiment of covenant faithfulness is solely in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus represents all that Israel was called to be with respect to the covenant, and fulfils it perfectly. Once the boundary of the covenant has been thus drawn so tightly, then *everyone* else, of necessity Jews as well as Gentiles, are judged to be outside the covenant, not part of the righteous people of God, and therefore "sinners".

the same boat as Gentiles (Rom. 2), who are plainly slaves to sin and unrighteous (Rom. 1:18–32). So now Paul has the whole mass of humanity without distinction (3:22) in need of salvation. This universal problem, must of necessity be an individual problem. Once Paul moves in his thinking to these universal categories, where there is no Jew or Greek or any other distinction (Gal. 3:28), then the gospel takes on a clear individual appeal, for it is individual selves who can now choose to respond to God's action in Christ and to become part of the new people of God, the righteous. God's action in Christ may have been seen and interpreted by Paul against the backdrop of the covenant, but, of necessity, the universal aspects of the gospel force us to recognise the important soteriological concerns that impel Paul's writing. Paul is doubtless concerned with covenantal questions about the make-up of the people of God, but his insights into the universal sin-slavery of humankind, and about salvation through faith, aside from any ethnic requirements, indicate a serious concern by Paul with individual soteriology. Everyone is in need of salvation, anyone can be saved, and therefore the imperative is that each individual should respond to Christ and become part of the new community of faith.

Paul has been discussing what amounts to an anthropological concern with universal solidarity in sin from chapters 1 to 3. What he then begins to discuss is the means of salvation, which he believes is centred on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. From his covenantal background, he sees that Christ is the only one who has been faithful to the covenant, and that therefore, salvation must be found in him. And, again, from his covenantal worldview, the means of finding salvation through Christ is through faith—but now, faith in the sense of trust and confidence in what Christ has done, as opposed to faithfulness (although Paul does not lose this sense of faith as faithfulness entirely, except that faithfulness now need not be expressed as faithfulness to the ethnic requirements of the Jewish Law). The fact, however, that faith has now been removed from an ethnic or strictly community setting—in the sense that it does not depend on the operation of any pre-defined national, gender-based, or sociological grouping—and can be exercised by any person, from whatever social grouping, of necessity throws the spotlight on the individual and his or her personal response. Faith has become dependent upon some personal decisions of the believer—the decision to believe the gospel message about God's action in Christ, the decision

to join the new community of faith, the decision to adopt certain appropriate lifestyle modes of behaviour, for example—and upon certain inner, personal attitudes. These include the adoption of a new belief system, and trust and confidence in Christ's action on the believer's behalf. All these fall first and foremost into the category of the cognitive and emotional—and therefore, of necessity, of the personal and individual.[51]

The major issue within the emerging Christian movement in Paul's day, as we have seen, was that of the relationship between Jews and Gentiles within the people of God. We have also seen how this manifested itself in the tensions that were evident in the Roman church to which Paul wrote, and we have recognised the fact that Paul writes partly to address these tensions amongst a group whose assistance he hoped to gain for his proposed future missions. The fact, however, that Paul was concerned with this macro group-oriented issue, and brings his letter to a climax in chapters 9–11 in his attempt to counter Gentile superiority, should not make us blind to the fact that his gospel, as he explains it, has, and has of necessity, an important appeal and application to the individual. Sin, slavery to sin and exercising faith in order to participate in the righteous community all operate on the level of the individual self. The track down which Paul has come in his thinking, albeit prompted by his covenantal theology,[52] nevertheless leads him to contemplate anthropological issues such as the plight of unredeemed humanity and the need for individual salvation. These are key elements in a Pauline gospel which, although springing from a Jewish covenantal background, now addresses more generalised issues—those of humanity without God

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[51] This sense of faith in Paul is borne out by many writers: C.A.A. Scott, *Christianity According to St. Paul* (Cambridge, CUP, 1932), 133, where faith is "a joyful self-committal of the whole personality to God"; J. Ziesler, *Romans*, 81, "faith is response and unconditional commitment to God and his Christ"; J.D.G. Dunn, Romans 1–8, "'faith' consistently in Paul denotes unconditional trust in God"; C. Rowland, *Christian Origins*, 139, "God's reign . . . called for an individual response . . . obedience and dependence of faith".

[52] E. Käsemann, "Justification and Salvation History in the Epistle to the Romans", in *Perspectives on Paul*, transl. M. Kohl (1969) (London, SCM, 1971), 65–68. Käsemann makes the point that "it cannot be seriously disputed that salvation history forms the horizon of Pauline theology, but that this salvation-history importantly involved individuals . . . the victory of Christ which is the culmination of salvation history, is worked out through individual believers who 'bear their crosses and suffer as disciples'".

and of the need for salvation. Nor are these side issues for Paul[53]—his experience of the world beyond Judaism brought him face to face with the pain of individual lives in slavery to powers beyond their control, seeking freedom and self-mastery,[54] and the gospel of redemption through Christ was highly relevant. It should be no surprise to us, then, to hear Paul emphasise such issues that concern the individual in his explanation of his understanding of the gospel in Romans.

The fact that the covenant underpins Paul's theological reflection and what he has to say about faith should not deflect us from recognising the individual relevance of his theology. The covenant has to do with an elect people, certainly, and the questions asked of covenantal theology by the advent of Christ have undoubtedly important corporate aspects, but, as Longenecker has pointed out, the "social and communal dimensions are not the sum total of covenantal theology".[55] In Pauline studies recently, the covenant has almost become a sociological phenomena, with its terminology playing a key rôle in the definition of social identity. Longenecker doubts, however, that covenant theology is simply about matters of social definition and suggests that Paul's theology has much greater depths than the issue of what group is and what group is not God's people. As indicated in this section, given the thrust of Paul's argument in Romans thus far which has explored the common plight of all human beings, and the possibilities for inclusion for every individual amongst the ranks of the "righteous" through Christ's faithfulness, we must recognise Paul's argumentation to be not only covenantal in nature, but also soteriological—and individualistically soteriological.[56] There is a covenantal basis for what Paul has to say, but the very nature of the universality of his gospel gives it an *a priori* emphasis on the individual.

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[53] E. Käsemann, "Justification and Salvation History", 73. Käsemann comments that the justification of the sinner "is the centre, not only of the Pauline message, but of the whole Christian proclamation".

[54] S. Stowers, *A Re-Reading of Romans*, 42–82.

[55] B.W. Longenecker, "Defining the Faithful Character of the Covenantal Community", 75, 76.

[56] M.A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 221 agrees that 3:21f. are to be interpreted in individualistic, soteriological terms, along with a recognition of the covenant background assumed by Paul. Seifrid stresses that the atoning death of Jesus is presented by Paul as a display of God's faithfulness to his covenantal provisions—so God remains faithful to the covenant, but will justify anyone—Jew or Gentile alike, on the basis of faith. The covenant, therefore is in the background, and individual salvation to the fore.

Sociological Interpretations of Faith

Writers such as Wright, as we have seen, have highlighted the covenantal backdrop to Paul's understanding of faith, and have stressed the collective meaning of faith as a defining element for the nation. I have sought to demonstrate the importance of seeing the fundamental individual nature of faith in both Jewish tradition and in Pauline thinking, and that Paul's covenant theology, refracted through the Christ-event, becomes importantly individualistic in its application. One other aspect of the collective interpretation of faith in Romans, however, needs to be addressed briefly.

Not only has the collective nature of faith in Pauline thinking been discussed by placing it within its Jewish covenantal context, but it has been emphasised recently in discussions of Romans by a focus on the social function of faith within the Pauline communities and their immediate social setting.

Watson, for example, wants to emphasise how Romans 3 operates sociologically, where the antithesis between "faith" and "works" works at the collective level of the rivalry between two sectarian communities—that of the Pauline congregations and that of the Jewish community. "The antithesis between faith and works is . . . not a clash between two great opposing theological principles. It must be interpreted sociologically: it expresses the sectarian separation of Pauline congregations from the Jewish community".[57] For Watson, Paul's aim in the earlier part of chapter three (vv. 9–20) is not to demonstrate universal participation in sin, by highlighting Jewish sin in the same way as he has highlighted Gentile sin. Paul's aim here is to put Jews on the same level as the Gentiles and thus to "deny again the claim that salvation is to be found through membership of the Jewish community".[58] Paul's purpose here is thus sociological and sectarian in nature, rather than theological and anthropological. Paul's purpose, according to Watson, is to encourage Jewish Christians to abandon their synagogue allegiance and to adhere to his own law-free groups. He thus spends time highlighting Jewish sin and the uselessness of the Law as a means of salvation—i.e. in demonstrating that membership of the Jewish community has noth-

[57] F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 134.
[58] F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 128.

ing to offer in terms of being the people of God. This is in preparation for the positive argument which he begins in v. 21 for the union of Jewish Christians with Gentile Christians. Having contested the view that salvation is guaranteed for the adherents of the law—the Jewish community—Paul now begins to explain his own understanding of the "righteousness of God". God's saving action has come to benefit both Jews and Gentiles though the death of Christ, but participation in the benefits of this salvation comes now through "faith", and "apart from the Law"—that is, without the need for membership of the Jewish community. For Watson, what "faith" means is the identification of Jewish Christians with the non-Law observing Gentile Christian congregation. He suggests that "faith is defined in vv. 22b–24 as the bond of unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians", and describes it as "the principle which abolishes the distinction between Jews and Gentiles".[59] So Watson makes the case that what Paul is talking about when he uses the word "faith" is mainly a way of describing a way of life—and a way of life that is set in contrast to a rival way of life. So "works of the law" describes the loyalties and ways of the Jewish community, while "faith" describes the social cohesion of the Pauline communities which are set in stark sectarian contrast to the synagogue. Faith and works thus describe two different patterns of religion, one—Jewish—which emphasises the continuity of a traditional religious community and its social norms, and one—Pauline Gentile—which stands for a non-Law observing community which can embrace both Gentiles and Jews. Faith in Watson seems to have become virtually devoid of any personal, psychological or inner meaning and functions primarily on a sociological and corporate level.

Another sociological interpretation of what Paul means by "faith" has come from Bossman.[60] Bossman is at pains to highlight for us the non-individualistic nature of the Mediterranean world in which Paul lived. This being so, he cautions against interpreting faith as a means for personal—i.e. introspective and psychological—salvation. The nature of the collective thought-world which Paul shared mitigates against such an idea coming close to Paul's intended meaning.

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[59] F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 132, 133.

[60] D.M. Bossman, "Paul's Mediterranean Gospel: Faith, Hope, Love", *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 25 2 (1995), 71–78.

According to Bossman, in Paul's collectivist social setting, "the person is entirely grounded in the group",[61] and so we must find the mean of such terms as "faith", "hope", or "love" in social values and corporate standards within the Christian groups. Hence, faith has little to do with personal issues such as guilt or individual justification. Rather, it is a "shared vocational hallmark" of the messianic assembly; a "central constitutive value both in the formation and the reputation of the assembly", and a "norm for corporate salvation".[62] Bossman identifies the Christian assembly within the matrix of first century social groupings as a "corporate family", where Jesus is the head and where individuals become socialised into a new family setting, under the protection of the head to whom they give their undivided loyalty.

In this schema, faith becomes a group attribute which builds "solidarity and resistance to outside affliction", wins a collective salvation for the group as a whole and acts as a powerful advertisement to the outside world regarding the cohesiveness of the group.[63] Bossman thus roots his understanding of faith in Paul's writings in the social world of the first century, in particular in the setting of a Mediterranean "household", seeing the collective values and standards of this close-knit group as giving the vital clues to Paul's meaning when he refers to "faith".

Both Watson and Bossman's socially oriented understandings of faith fail to do justice to the primary, personal aspects of faith. Social approaches such as these undoubtedly can give insights into the world in which Paul lived which are useful for interpretation, but they miss vital and intended meanings by forcing the social and collective to the exclusion of the personal. As we have seen, scientific anthropological studies will not let us simply classify one society as completely collectivist, or one completely individualistic;[64] furthermore, it is unlikely that the first century Mediterranean self was any different from modern selves in terms of active self-consciousness, intention, emotion, and inner psychological world.[65] An understanding of the thrust of Paul's argument in Romans 1–3 and the verses in ch. 3

[61] D.M. Bossman, "Paul's Mediterranean Gospel", 72.
[62] D.M. Bossman, "Paul's Mediterranean Gospel", 72, 73.
[63] D.M. Bossman, "Paul's Mediterranean Gospel", 75.
[64] See Chapter 3, 49–50.
[65] See Chapter 2, 28.

under consideration in this section point directly to the relevance of faith to the individual needs of the first century Mediterranean self, and the cognitive, trust-focused sense of faith in Paul's argument in Romans. This present reading of these early chapters of Romans highlights the anthropological concerns of Paul which go far beyond either covenantal boundary markers or the sociological context of the Roman Christian community (important as these are in our overall understanding of Romans, as has been readily admitted). This concern of Paul's with the fundamental sinful condition of all humanity, and the solution based on participation by faith in Christ's perfect response to God by individuals, places an emphasis on the personal nature of faith. Indeed, our tracking of the logic of Paul's discussion in chapter three of Romans, where faith takes on a meaning very different than "faithfulness to the Jewish law", illustrates the radically individual nature of faith.

Paul's concern with the salvation of the individual was as great as our own, and his meaning when he spoke of faith had a distinct and primary operation at the individual, inner and psychological level.

Conclusions

A reductionist sociological interpretation of faith will not do; nor will a covenantal understanding which becomes purely sociological in outlook, focusing primarily on matters of collective identity. As we examine the context in which Paul speaks of faith in Romans 3, which is his exposition of the solidarity of both Jews and Gentiles in slavery to sin, the impartiality of God and the possibility of being counted amongst the righteous due to the demonstration of the righteousness of God in the person of Christ—we must recognise the importance of faith to the individual. Faith is something exercised by individuals, which enables them to participate in Christ (in, as we have seen, his faithfulness, which is in contrast to human shortcomings) and in the righteous people of God.

Paul's idea of faith was grounded in his Hebrew tradition, but the essential faithfulness sense of faith was something that Paul saw as having been achieved by Christ. The sense of faith as trust in the saving action of God, however, remained, and now, for Paul, was directed towards Christ and his faithful death. Such a meaning of

faith clearly involves mental, cognitive and emotional activities, all of which operate on a personal, individual level. Faith certainly is a corporate characteristic and defining feature of the people of God; Paul was certainly concerned with the issue of who can claim to be the people of God, for he believed vehemently that this could no longer be restricted to ethnic Israel. But were we to stop here in our consideration of the meaning of faith for Paul, we would largely miss the point. Paul's considerations of the failings of both Israel and the Gentiles led him to a deep understanding of the fundamental state of humanity—sinful, in need of a manifestation of the righteousness of God, in need of salvation. This has enormous implications for any one individual, which it is impossible to believe that Paul missed. And the nature of faith itself, which operates primarily at an individual level, indicates further for us that Paul's gospel at its most fundamental is an matter for the individual, which offers the individual who is under the wrath of God (3:5), "under sin" (3:9), and "accountable to God" (3:19) the opportunity of redemption and vindication (3:24, 26). Good news indeed.

CHAPTER NINE

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE STRUGGLE WITH SIN AND THE LAW: ROMANS 7:7–25

Introduction

We now turn to our final passage in Romans to examine the existence of aspects of Paul's thinking which concern the individual. As we have seen, recent and current approaches to Romans have concentrated on highlighting more corporate issues, and some interpretations which have employed social science methods and terminology have ignored, or sometimes denied, the idea that Paul in Romans is at all concerned with the salvation of the individual.

When we turn to Romans 7, at face value, the language of the first person singular, along with the description of the divided self, apparently undergoing an inner struggle between passions and will, and the anguished cry of v. 24, all seem to point quite clearly to a concern in Paul with the individual and his or her personal life. Paul here seems to be bringing his previous arguments about the sinful plight of humankind and the righteous action of God in bringing a universal salvation to those who have faith in Christ right down to a very personal level. As Paul explains the interplay of Law and the power of Sin with a person's desires, it looks for all the world as if he is discussing the relevance to the individual of all his previous talk about righteousness, universal sin and salvation and justification.

Furthermore, since Paul conducts his discussion using the personal pronoun "I", we get the distinct impression that Paul is using his own personal experience to make his point. How much more personal and individual can we get, we might argue, than a passage using such personal language about inner morality struggles?

The particular commandment—"do not covet"—which Paul uses to base his argument about the struggle with the Jewish Law is one that focuses particularly on inner desires and passions. Paul's discussion is not about Jewish ceremonial law, but about that part of the decalogue which brings the rule of God right into the domain of the individual and makes unseen passions as much subject to

God's standards as any outward action. And as Paul proceeds with the 10th commandment to make his point, he seems to probe down into a personal psychology that we moderns understand only too well—an inner struggle between how we feel we should act and how we actually do act. Paul uses terms like ἔσω ἄνθρωπος, and νοός as opposed to σὰρξ, and wants to be free from τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου. It all sounds like a very modern struggle with a very up to date psychology. Indeed, so clear seems to be our identification with the psychology of the chapter, that Theissen has been able to map the psycho-analytical categories of ego, id and superego on to Paul's discussion without any great contortion of the text.[1]

Most interpretations of Romans 7, until recently, have focused on more personal ways of reading what Paul has to say here. To be sure, the understanding of who exactly Paul is referring to in vv. 7–25 has varied greatly,[2] but most commentators have seen the relevance to the individual of Paul's discussion, whether they have taken Paul to be referring to a person's experience prior to becoming a Christian, or to the experience of the individual Christian. For most, Paul is here discussing either a self that has previously struggled with sin and is delivered by the power of Christ, or a self that continues to struggle with sin, albeit with the promise of a victory through Christ that is hinted at in v. 25 and explored in ch. 8. Either way the emphasis is on the effect on the individual of God's salvation through Christ.

Collective Interpretations

With the increasing attention we have noted that has been given in Romans scholarship to the social setting of the text and the writer, the need to recognise Paul's concern about the relationship between Jews and Gentiles within the churches, and the increasing use of methods and tools from the social sciences, some recent work on Romans 7 has sought to highlight more collective issues in the text.

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[1] G. Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Thought* (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1987), 244.

[2] O. Kuss, *Der Römerbrief: Zweite Lieferung: Röm 6:11 bis 8:19* (Regensburg, Pustet, 1959), 480 admits that there seems to be almost no interpretation of 7:7–25 which is completely satisfactory!

Malina includes some aspects of Romans 7 in his socio-anthropological reading of Pauline texts. His interpretation of Romans 7 is against the background of Mary Douglas' Grid and Group Model of society.[3] This model seeks to understand a particular group through the use of two variables—grid, which refers to the degree of adherence by the group to the symbol system of the society within which it is operating; and group, which is indicative of the degree to which members of the group feel embedded within the group. Malina plots the world of Paul as "strong group/low grid", meaning that Paul and his churches, like all conquered peoples and non-elites in the Roman empire, had a strong group identity, with individuals relying on their group for self-definition, but who did not share their over-riding culture's range of values and perceptions.[4] They were, in other words, a strong, self-contained group which did not share the prevailing culture, morals and standards of the Roman empire. Furthermore, this situation, essentially of a minority seeking to preserve itself within a greater, and not necessarily sympathetic whole, produces a focus within the group on group boundaries, with importance laid on who is to be counted in and who counted out. Sin in this model is seen as deviance from the group's norms and, in the case of Romans 7, where Paul refers to ἁμαρτία as an external power, it is to be seen as an "evil permeating his strong group/low grid world".[5] Sin, says Malina, for Paul was a negative, coercive force which penetrated his group from the world outside and could only be escaped from by a shift of group loyalty to Christ. The Jewish Law, seen by Malina as "normative Jewish custom" was no longer legitimated by God, and hence was neither binding nor effective in combating sin. Only by a commitment to Christ, i.e. by shifting group loyalty to the Christian group, could a person escape the power of permeating evil. This salvation of God's people from the negative influence of sin is to be understood entirely in terms of the collective, as opposed to personally or individually. According to Malina, what Paul was doing was responding to the "anomie of strong group/low grid existence", by creating a strong and cohesive

[3] M. Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York, Vintage Books, 1973, reprint 1970).

[4] B.J. Malina, *Christian origins and Cultural Anthropology: Practical Models for Biblical Interpretation* (Atlanta, John Knox, 1986), 37–44, 131–38.

[5] B.J. Malina, *Christian origins and Cultural Anthropology*, 137.

social body described by the term "in Christ". Faith is "the emotional anchorage" that comes with belonging to such a group, and love the "forms of reciprocity characteristic of group members".[6] Malina's is a thorough-going sociological analysis of Paul, and although he does not attempt a systematic exegesis of the chapter, his approach to both the Law and Sin in the chapter is to treat them entirely through the lens of social behaviour and collective action. Although Malina's model seems to allow some degree of independent action by the individual—in the possibility of changing group loyalty, and in the possibility of exhibiting deviant behaviour—the strong sociological forces which he proposes are at work, defining and determining the behaviour of members of the group—group identity, group loyalty and sin as an external, cultural power—actually leaves us with very group-embedded individuals and very little sense of the possibility of individual, self-determined action. There is no sense here that Paul might be discussing how individuals experience an inner struggle with passion and their internal sense of what they should or should not do, and how that struggle might be resolved. For Malina, it is enough to describe the situation in Romans 7 in terms of members of groups and the sociological forces that impinge upon them as a result of group dynamics. Although few writers are prepared to view the text through such patently sociological lenses as does Malina, the sociological highlighting of the importance of in-groups and out-groups and of group boundaries is clearly something we can detect in the approach of other scholars.

Another writer that shares something of Malina's non-individualistic view of sin in Romans 7 is Krister Stendahl, who focuses, again on ἁμαρτία as an external power. This, of course, is very much the sense in which Paul uses the term in the chapter, especially in vv. 17–23. (In these verses, Sin is a power external to the individual which struggles against the better wishes of the "I"). But for Stendahl, Paul is here thinking in "cosmic" terms, where sin is "a power game in which we get trapped, or nations get trapped", and hence has a greater meaning than a "guilt-ridden individual". For Stendahl, what is going on in Romans 7 with the self that struggles with wrong action, is human tragedy on a macro scale, rather than a comment on "guilt experienced in an individual way".[7]

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[6] B.J. Malina, *Christian origins and Cultural Anthropology*, 137.
[7] K. Stendahl, *Final Account*, 28–30.

Watson's treatment of the chapter also comes from a clearly stated sociological perspective. Paul's purpose here, according to Watson, is to "convince his Jewish Christian readers that the effect of the law in the Jewish community is to intensify disastrously the dominion of sin" and hence to aid his attempt to encourage them to break their ties with the Jewish synagogue and unite with the Pauline Gentile Christians. Watson's analysis revolves around what he sees as Paul's over-riding concern with the two groups within the Roman church, and he see Romans 7 as Paul's attempt to implicate the Law with the power of sin and so direct the Jewish Christians, to whom the letter is addressed, away from allegiance to the wider Jewish community. He sees vv. 7–25, then, as reflecting the voice of a Jew, a man under the law, from the perspective of faith, detailing his plight, where allegiance to the law gives no power to keep its precepts or be free from sin.[8] Watson does not agree, despite the positive statements by Paul about the Law in vv. 12, 14 and 16, that the chapter is an apologia for the Law.[9] For Watson, Paul's reason for any positive comment about the Law is merely that he wants his Jewish audience to accept his more negative view of the actual effects of the Law. They will be more likely to accept this if he has at least something positive to say about its theoretical essential goodness.[10] So, Watson sees little theologising on Paul's part about the Law, and wants, rather, to ground his argument concerning the Law entirely on the group struggle that he proposes.

Watson does, to be sure, in his analysis recognise the personal way in which sin works. He understands the sin mentioned in v. 6 to be primarily sexual in nature, referring back to the Genesis 3 account of Adam and Eve. Verses 7–12 describe the primal event in which the power of Sin enlisted the divine commandment against sexual lust to produce desire and death, while vv. 13 onward refer to the present reality that has sprung from this—the Power of Sin at work in human beings, producing actual human sin. Watson's account does not deny the personal nature of sin and the struggle described in vv. 14–25, but, nevertheless, he sees the purpose of

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[8] F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 155.

[9] R. Bultmann, *Existence and Faith* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1961), 153; W.G. Kümmel, *Römer 7 und die Bekehrung des Paulus* (1929), reprinted in *Römer 7 und das Bild des Menschen im Neuen Testament* (TBü 53, Munich, Kaiser, 1974), 8; J.C. Beker, *Paul*, 238.

[10] F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 153.

Paul's argument as being directed towards a thoroughly corporate, group-oriented goal. This results in a view of Paul's argument which sees it as "pragmatic and opportunist, rather than being the result of profounder theological reflection".[11] Watson's sociological-based interpretation of the text, which focuses closely on corporate and group issues, then, seems to obscure the full anthropological, soteriological point of the text.

Other writers, too, prefer to focus on the Jew—Gentile relationship in their interpretation of the text, rather than more personal interpretations. For Nanos, for example, this chapter is all about the exclusion of Gentiles from the Jewish community because of Jewish "covetousness" of circumcision and the Law.[12] Nanos, as we have seen, places the Gentile group to which Paul writes in Rome firmly within the synagogue, as "righteous Gentiles", but nevertheless developing a "sub-group identity" and tempted to start ignoring Jewish behaviour patterns. He envisages then, a particular social setting, where, again, group boundaries are of prime importance. Will Jews exclude Gentiles because of their insistence on and love for, the Law? Will Gentiles within the Jewish synagogue who have embraced Jesus Christ, now discriminate against Jews, because they now feel they have no longer any need of the Law? For Nanos, the chapter is all about group exclusivism. This is the sense in which he interprets the sin of "coveting". Coveting, here, according to Nanos, is a "covetous insistence of Jewish priority among Jews in Christ . . . the one human sin that the Law cannot help overcome".[13] Nanos highlights the very positive statements that Paul makes about the Law, noting that for Paul, it ought to be obeyed, fulfilled and joyfully concurred with. The problem, however, that Paul is at pains to point out, according to Nanos, is that the Law "cannot finally overcome covetousness of the privileged status of those who have it"[14]—so that even when faithful law-keepers are doing all they should be doing, they find it impossible not to look down on those who don't have the Law, and are thus "covetous" of their own law-righteous status. This

[11] F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 153.

[12] M. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, 358–71.

[13] M. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, 358. Nanos enlists for this view the support of A.F. Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 243–244. Coveting for Segal in Romans 7 refers to religious impulse, as opposed to sexual desire. It is a Jewish passion for, and joy in, doing the Law which brings a sense of Jewish-centred security.

[14] M. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, 364.

is the precise nature of the problem that Paul is highlighting in vv. 15–24; it refers exactly and only to the sin of religious covetousness. Here, then, Paul is not making some theological evaluation of the plight of the individual struggling with sin and what he knows to be the right thing to do, but rather he is referring to a group-related attitude that specifically arises out of the proposed social situation of Gentiles fitting in to the Jewish community. It is a little difficult, actually, to understand precisely to which group Nanos feels Paul is addressing his comments in ch. 7. His explanation of the sin of covetousness as religious covetousness seems most applicable to the Jewish community's problem with accepting Gentiles, and, indeed, this seems to be Nanos' point. Elsewhere, however, Nanos clearly has the letter addressed to a Gentile audience,[15] and towards the end of his proposed interpretation of Romans 7, he seems to suggest that it is the religious boasting of Gentiles, who are now tempted towards exclusivity with regards to the rest of the Jewish community on the basis of faith in Christ, that is the real target of Paul's argument.[16] Nanos contrasts Romans with Galatians, where Paul is confronting Jewish exclusivism; at Rome it is the other way about. It is not entirely clear how Romans 7 supports this conclusion of Nanos'; even if we allow that covetousness refers to religious boasting, Paul's argument does seem more suited to be directed at Jewish boasting than Gentile. In any case, we note the strong group-oriented hermeneutic framework which Nanos has adopted in his approach to the text.

This is also the background against which Stowers approaches the text as well. For Stowers, the chapter is assuredly not an "analysis of the human predicament to which Christ was the solution".[17] Stowers objects, rightly, to the way in which Romans 7 has been used by Christians to criticise "Jewish religiosity", and the supposed archetypal Jewish struggle with religious boasting and law-keeping. He also objects, though, to an interpretation of Paul's statements about sin, the law, boasting and grace that focuses on individual anthropology or psychology. The Western theology of conversion and struggle with sin arising out of the Augustinian tradition of reading Romans

[15] M. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, 10.

[16] M. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, 365, 366. "faith in Christ can still be made to function in the same covetous way as faith in the works of the Law for the one who looks to the other to judge him or her an outsider".

[17] S.K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 258.

7 is, according to Stowers, far from the intended meaning of the text. For Stowers the chapter concerns primarily the relation of Gentile followers of Jesus Christ to the Jewish law and how their desire for moral self-mastery is not to be found in Torah, and so contributes to Paul's overall rhetorical strategy in his letter of exploring the current place of both Jews and Gentiles in God's plan through Jesus Christ.

For Stowers, the "I" of ch. 7 can easily be explained, not either as autobiographical, nor as fictive, but as part of an ancient, rhetorical *prosopopoiia*, or speech-in-character. Here, then Paul depicts a character who lacks self-mastery and struggles for an answer. Self-mastery is presented by Stowers as a Gentile aspiration of fundamental importance, and ch. 7 is Paul's response to those Gentiles who think that the answer is to be found in the Jewish law. Paul takes up a characterisation of Gentiles that he has made throughout the letter, as those who are under the mastery of their appetites and passions, given over by God to their lusts, impurity and dishonouring of their bodies (1:19–27). Now in ch. 7 he returns to the Gentiles' passions (παθήματα) and desire (ἐπιθυμία), to which he says they are in bondage. The Jewish law, with which these Gentiles have had contact, only makes this bondage known and its hold increased. For Stowers, Paul is here adapting for his own purposes a "Greco-Roman discourse about the problem of *akrasia*, in service of an argument against gentiles attempting to gain self-mastery by following the law".[18] Akrasia was the concept of "weakness of the will", of passion being stronger than reasoned reflection, which appears in a number of Graeco-Roman texts, including Euripides' *Medea* and *Hippolytus*, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and various texts by Epictetus, Seneca, and Ovid.[19] Paul, then, uses a moral problem familiar to his Gentile audience and relates it to the Jewish law as a possible solution to ἀκρασία. Paul's conclusion is that the law is not the

[18] S.K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 279.

[19] Euripides, *Hippolytus* (379–383) in ET: A.S. Way, *Euripedes* (vol. 4 of 4 vols., LCL, 1912); *Medea* 1074–80 in Way, 367; Aristotle (*Ethica Nicomachea* 7.2) in ET: H. Rackham, *Aristotle* (vol. 19 of 23 vols., LCL, 1968), 379; Epictetus, *Discourses* (2.26.4) in ET: W.A. Oldfather, *Epictetus* (vol. 2 of 2 vols., LCL, 1925), 431, 433; Seneca, *Medea* (938–944) in ET: F.J. Miller, *Seneca's Tragedies* (vol. 1 of 2 vols., LCL, 1917), 307; Ovid, *Metamorphosis* (7.21) in ET: A.D. Melville, *Ovid: Metamorphosis* (Oxford, OUP, 1986); Plato, *Protagorus* (352d), in ET: W.R.M. Lamb, *Plato's Laches, Protagorus, Meno, Euthydemus* (vol. 4 of 4 vols., LCL, 1924).

answer for Gentiles. What they need, actually, explains Paul as he proceeds in ch. 8, is a new mind and the enabling power of the Spirit to help them keep the (non-Jewish) requirement of the law.[20] This is how "the Gentile peoples can attain the privileged status of sonship that Israel already has".[21]

Thus for Stowers, Paul's argument again is focussed on the relationship between Gentiles and Jews, rather than being in any sense a generic discourse on the moral plight of an individual struggling with sin. In fact Stowers specifically excludes this meaning when he notes that in vv. 15 and 17 the "person" does not know what is happening to him and is being acted upon by external forces. This, says Stowers, is Paul using the "language of external power for moral and psychological states",[22] language which is metaphorical and rhetorical only, used to characterise in a stereotypical way his Gentile readers. These are people, claims Stowers, who having been attracted to Judaism are caught between two cultures,[23] but who cannot submit to a foreign law because their Gentile passions will not permit it. Thus the argument revolves around people-groups and their relations, as opposed to individual psychology or salvation. In some ways, Stowers' denial of an integrated personality and objection to the suggestion that Paul could here be discussing personal psychology seems inconsistent with his discussion of self-mastery as an important driving force in Greek society and his proposal that it is precisely this with which Paul is dealing in Romans. This would seem, rather, to put the spotlight squarely on the individual—the internal struggle between what he feels to be the right course of action and how his passions are directing him are at the heart of all of this, and yet Stowers is determined to direct this line of thought toward group differences between Jews and Greeks and to deny any real anthropology or individualist soteriology in the chapter.

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[20] S.K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 281, 282.

[21] S.K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 284.

[22] S.K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 2.

[23] S.K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 280. Stowers goes on to claim that Paul's language in vv. 7–25 is the "language of fragmented personality", which in Greek tradition is represented by talk of distinct external agents at work in the person. We have noted earlier (30, 31) the inadequacy of earlier scholarship's characterisation of Homeric man's personality as "fragmented". Stowers, here, thus effectively removes any real sense in Paul's argument of a true inward struggle, and an integrated personality.

Another, rather different, approach taken by a number of scholars, focuses on a more covenantal reading of the text, and, though not necessarily (or in some cases, in any way) denying that there may be much that is of importance to the individual in the text, again serves to highlight matters of more corporate importance.

Thielman, for example, while allowing that "Paul's language does take on a tone appropriate to the individual in chaps. 5–8", asserts that these chapters are "as concerned with the people of God as they are with the individual".[24] Thielman wants to ensure that we do not reduce Paul's argument to the effects of justification on the individual believer, and insists that we must see the individual in these chapters firmly within the wider community. He argues, then, that although explicit references to Israel and the Hebrew scriptures recede in chs. 5–8, the story of Israel is fundamental to the theology here. In particular, in ch. 7, Thielman views the first person singular as reflecting a corporate struggle as well as an individual one. So Paul is here discussing the biblical story of Israel's disobedience and her continued disobedience. Thielman finds an important point of comparison in the anguish of the "I" struggling to keep the Mosaic Law in vv. 13–25 and the prayers of confession in Ezra 9, Nehemiah 9, Daniel 9 and Baruch 1–3, which express anguish over Israel's continued disobedience in spite of God's faithfulness. What Paul is doing here, then, according to Thielman, is to tell the story of Israel's disobedience,[25] to exonerate the law of God from blame for Israel's current plight, and to suggest that the restoration for which many Jews waited and the life promised in the covenant, which they clearly do not currently experience, was to be found, not in the Law, but in "the newness of the Spirit" (v. 6). Thielman concludes that in vv. 13–25, "Paul was thinking not simply of himself but of his people and of the biblical story of their disobedience"[26] and that his purpose was to highlight that the restoration of Israel had come in the new community of the Spirit in Christ.

Wright's theological reading of Romans also casts it in a strong covenantal framework, and locates Paul's thought within the sym-

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[24] F. Thielman, "The Story of Israel and the Theology of Romans 5–8" in D.M. Hay & E.E. Johnson (eds.), *Pauline Theology: Volume III, Romans*, 169–195 (172, 195).

[25] F. Thielman, "The Story of Israel and the Theology of Romans 5–8", 193, suggests that in vv. 7–13, some elements fit the Adam story and some Israel/Sinai, and that Paul deliberately mixed these in the passage.

[26] F. Thielman, "The Story of Israel and the Theology of Romans 5–8", 194.

bolic world of Judaism, with a strong emphasis on the One true God, Israel's election, her continued sense of exile, and her hope in the covenant faithfulness of God and so, of eventual restoration.[27] Wright's proposal is that Paul wrote Romans to promote his missionary strategy which included Rome as a base, and so had to counter the growing propensity towards anti-Jewish sentiment amongst Gentile Christians there. He did this, however, in a way that sought to avoid reinstating Jewish superiority. The way in which Paul attempted to do this was to explain how the covenant faithfulness of God was revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ, explaining how both Jew and Gentile now benefit from God's righteousness and come under the umbrella of the covenant, now come to fulfilment in Christ. Up to the end of ch. 4, Paul's argument is that God's covenant people is identified not by badges of Jewish ethnicity, but by their faith in Jesus, and that God has proved himself faithful to the Abrahamic covenant, through the manifestation of his righteousness in Christ. In the next four chapters, he then moves on to deal with a theological question that this argument about the justification of the covenant people raises: how can God pronounce a people to be justified when they are clearly not "completely renewed and morally whole"?[28] Paul's answer to this is that all the covenant privileges and blessings have been given to the Messiah, and that those who are "in him" share in these. Moreover, Israel's Torah is vindicated, even though it can now be seen to have a negative task and function. In this section, Paul is laying the groundwork for chs. 9–11, where he will argue that the Gentiles simply share in Israel's blessings, and so have a continuing obligation towards Jews. This is the focus of chs. 5–8, according to Wright, rather than "an abstract exposition of 'the result of justification'"[29] for the individual. Chapter 7, then, is both a defence of the Law and an explanation of the sinful state of Israel under the Law. Its focus is primarily on the current and continuing state of Israel, beset by sin and unable to find any power for release in Torah. This leads onwards to ch. 8 where we find Christ dealing with sin and the Spirit giving life, in a way that Torah was never able to do. Thus Paul is dealing with macro themes, here, according to Wright, at the level of the divine plan

[27] N.T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul", 32–34.
[28] N.T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul", 42.
[29] N.T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul", 43.

to deal with sin and the development of his purposes with his people. For Wright, both sections of the chapter deal with the result of the Law on Israel: vv. 7–12 show the effect of the coming of Torah; vv. 13–20 refer to the on-going situation of Israel, living under the Law.[30]

The focus in Wright's analysis is clearly on wider, corporate issues. That is not to say that he ignores the relevance of Paul's argument to the individual. For Wright, the covenant was instigated by God to deal with the world's sin; salvation is the ultimate point of the covenant, and God's over-arching plan of salvation is clearly Wright's concern. This of necessity for Wright has an important individual application, but his analysis of the theological framework of Romans undoubtedly draws attention to larger themes, which have to do with the covenant and the relationship within the covenant as a result of it coming to its "climax" in Christ.

Elliott, who wants to read Paul in a very political sense, agrees with this covenant emphasis in Wright, but, unlike Wright, wants to dispense with "soteriological" readings of Romans.[31] For Elliott, like many other commentators, Romans was written to target Gentile Christian arrogance, and Romans 7 serves as a vindication by Paul of Torah. Elliott highlights Paul's positive statements about the Law and says that Paul argues that the Law's "just requirement" is fulfilled by the Gentiles through their life in the Spirit (8:1–4). Thus Paul indicates the "Christian's changed relationship to Torah", rather than finding fault in the Law per se.[32] Paul wants Roman Gentile Christians to avoid "abandoning the people of the ancient covenant to the vicissitudes of Roman power"[33] and thus, in ch. 7, is primarily dealing with the relationship to the Law of Jews and Gentiles within the wider picture of the covenant purposes of God. While these broader issues are undoubtedly important, Elliott's approach denies that the passage has a application to "the conscience-stricken individual"[34] and wants, rather, to focus our attention on a Paul that was more concerned with opposing the disfranchisement of Israel amongst

[30] N.T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul", 51. Wright sums up ch. 7 as "a specifically *Christian* analysis of the plight of Israel under Torah".
[31] N. Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 133.
[32] N. Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 132.
[33] N. Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 139.
[34] N. Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 138.

Roman Gentiles. Once again we have a strongly corporate focus in an approach to the chapter.

A number of other writers, like Wright, see the "I" of ch. 7 representing Israel. Historically, this has not been a particularly popular view, although it does have some notable proponents.[35] A recent advocate of this approach has been Moo, who understands the "I" to be Paul in solidarity with Israel, and argues for a combination of the "I" being autobiographical and it being identified with Israel.[36] For Moo, 7:7–25 is something of an excursus and has a clear focus on the Mosaic law, explaining how the law of God could have become such a negative force in salvation history. Such an explanation is required, given all that Paul has had to say about the Law thus far in the letter, and especially in the light of vv. 1–6 where the law is portrayed as bringing forth only sin and death. Paul goes on, then, to vindicate the law from any charge that it is in itself sinful, but, however, to show that it has been usurped by the power of sin and so is ultimately unable to deliver people from this power. The main topic of the chapter, then, according to Moo is not human nature or anthropology, but Torah.

Moo, then, sees the "I" of vv. 7–13 as representing the history of Israel—alive spiritually prior to the coming of the law at Sinai, but then lost in transgression and sin, once the commandments were known. Thus the difficulty of interpreting v. 9 is resolved by seeing the time when "I" was alive apart from the law as that when Israel existed prior to the giving of the law at Sinai. The word ἔζων here for Moo does not carry a full theological meaning of "spiritual life", but just has the simple prosaic meaning "existing", or else possibly shows the position of Israel without the law relative to the very negative (death) position of living under it. Paul here is not describing

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[35] Chrysostom, Homily 13; J.A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 462–469; D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 423–441; M.W. Karlberg, "Israel's History Personified: Romans 7: 7–13 in Relation to Paul's Teaching on the 'Old Man'", *Trinity Journal* 7 (1986), 68–69; J. Lambrecht, "Man before and without Christ: Romans 7 and Pauline Anthropology," *Louvain Studies 5* (1974), 18–33; E. Stauffer, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament II*, 358–63; G. Schrenk, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament II*, 550–51; F. Thielman, "The Story of Israel and the Theology of Romans 5–8", 190–94; N.T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul", 49–54; idem, *Climax of the Covenant*, 197–98; also additional support for this view is listed in D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 426.

[36] D.J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 423–31; and elaborated in "Israel and Paul in Romans 7.7–12," *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986), 122–35.

the situation of everybody, and, according to Moo, certainly not Adam, but rather the historical confrontation of Israel with the law. And he uses the personal pronoun to describe himself in solidarity with his fellow countrymen. In support of this Moo notes that "the individual Jew had a lively sense of "corporate" identity with his people's history.[37] In the second half of the chapter, too, Paul speaks as a representative Jew, detailing his past struggles and defeats to illustrate the continued struggle of Israel to please God by means of the Mosaic law. Paul's positive statements about the ego's regard for the law—σύμφημι τῷ νόμῳ ὅτι καλός (v. 16), and συνήδομαι γὰρ τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ (v. 22)—make sense as describing the Jewish attitude to the law.

Attributing the passage to a description of Israel's salvation history also avoids a major difficulty that interpreters have, who wish to see in the vv. 14–25 a description of the Christian's ongoing struggle with sin (e.g. Dunn). The description of the "I" in v. 14, as πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν—seemingly a condition of utter servitude to sin's power sits ill with Paul's comments in ch. 6, that believers "have died to sin" (v. 2) and are therefore no longer δοῦλοι τῆς ἁμαρτίας (vv. 17, 18, 22). For Moo, this points decisively away from these verses describing Christian life. The "I" as representative of Israel's experience certainly avoids this particular difficulty.

There is thus a considerable body of major scholarly opinion that is attracted to seeing in Romans 7 more corporate themes and concerns. This is in part driven by the inherent difficulties in the text, with interpreting it as either autobiographical or primarily concerning the individual:

1. How can Paul possibly be speaking of himself in v. 9 when he says ἐγὼ δὲ ἔζθν χωρὶς νόμου? Was there ever a time in his life as an observant Jew when this could be said of him? The passage therefore is not to be taken autobiographically.
2. Similarly, the emphasis on the law in the passage seems to rule out the possibility of Paul referring to a generic individual—the "I" as "everyman". The historical situation described in vv. 7–13 could only have an application to those with a direct contact with the law.

[37] D.J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 431.

3. The change to the present tense in v. 14 indicates a shift in thinking from an historical review to an ongoing situation. The problem is how Paul, as a believer, could face such a ferocious struggle with sin to the point of suggesting that he is so πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν that he is quite unable to practice good. The alternative suggestion that vv. 14–25 describe Paul's struggle as a Pharisee, prior to meeting Christ, falters when compared to his seemingly robust pre-Christian conscience, described in Philippians 3.
4. The suggestion that in these verses Paul is describing generally the plight of the individual Christian also fails on the grounds that it is too negative a picture of the believer whom Paul has already described as free from sin.
5. If we then try and make vv. 14–25 apply to the unregenerate individual, although it resolves the difficulty of the Christian being a slave to sin, questions arise as to why Paul uses the present tense to describe the past experience of both himself and his readers.

In addition to these obvious textual difficulties, the focus on more corporate concerns is shaped by the socio-historical framework in which scholars are working, where the issue of Jew-Gentile participation in the people of God as a major concern of Paul and his contemporaries looms large in the background. This, and the emphasis on Paul's Jewish theological roots, which suggests a covenantal background to the worldview out of which Paul wrote his letters, seems to point us toward understanding the text primarily in more corporate ways. The trend we have demonstrated here in the authors reviewed, away from seeing personal issues and concerns in Romans, is, then, hardly surprising.

Romans 7—Primary Focus is the Individual

Despite the difficulties and trends just noted, it is likely that the primary focus of Romans 7 is on the individual. There is considerable support in the literature for seeing this emphasis in the passage, but it is hoped that the interpretation which follows avoids some of the difficulties that have been noted with other approaches that highlight more individual and personal interpretations. Although, as throughout this study, we must note that the recent emphasis on Paul's macro concerns in Romans is entirely valid and valuable in redressing an imbalance in the older literature which tended to focus

on individualistic ways of understanding the text, the suggestion here is that it is important not to miss important personal applications in Paul's argument as it proceeds. And this is particularly so in Romans 7, where it is vital not to ignore the highly personal way in which Paul chooses to speak. If Paul were primarily dealing with salvation history, either in a general way that includes both Gentiles and Jews, or more specifically with that of Israel, one wonders why he does so using the first person, and does so in such a way that gives such a strong impression of personal involvement in the struggle he describes in the chapter. If Paul's intent were to discuss the confrontation of either Adam or Israel with Torah, and Israel's on-going relationship with the Law, why does he not do so quite explicitly as when discussing these things at other points in the letter? The whole feel of the passage is personal and autobiographical, and this is an element that should not be disregarded when seeking to understand what Paul is saying here.

Of considerable importance in understanding Romans 7 is the issue of the audience to which Paul addressed his comments. The composition of Paul's readership has been discussed previously in this study,[38] and the matter is covered comprehensively in the commentaries and recent works on Romans. The general view is that the letter was written to a congregation of both Jews and Gentiles, with Gentiles forming a considerable majority in the church,[39] and the likelihood is that most of the Gentiles would have come from a synagogue/proselyte background.[40] That the congregation was mainly

[38] See Chapter 6, 94–96.

[39] E.g. D.L. Bartlett, *Romans*, 2; J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, xliv–liv; D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 3–5; W. Schmithals, *Der Römerbrief: Ein Kommentar*, 69–91; A.J.M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*, 44–65; J. Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 11–15. Some scholars recently, however, have wanted to highlight the entirely Gentile nature of the church in Rome: S Stowers, *A Re-Reading of Romans*, sees no reason to postulate a Jewish contingent, and his thesis that Paul was addressing the issue of how Gentiles control their passions depends on a wholly Gentile congregation; M. Nanos, *Romans*, also supposes that Paul wrote his letter to an entirely Gentile group, though Nanos' thesis is quite different from Stowers—he believes Paul wanted to integrate the Gentile group in Rome better within the Jewish synagogue. F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 97–98, takes the opposite view that Paul was addressing Jews in Rome, in an attempt to persuade them to separate completely from Judaism and join the Gentile, Pauline congregation. See additional support and references in Chapter 6, n. 46.

[40] In a view echoed by many other scholars, J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, xlviiff., suggests that the pattern of early Christian evangelism was concentrated on the

Gentile is strongly suggested by the way in which Paul addresses the Romans in ch. 1 (vv. 5, 6, 13) and by the clear content of 11:13–32 and 15:7–12. Given the amount of time, however, that Paul spends in his letter discussing the issue of law-keeping with respect to salvation,[41] he must have reckoned that there was a danger of the problem of legalism affecting the Romans. This could only have been a danger if there was a Jewish contingent within the Roman church, which had the potential of promoting a law-observant gospel to the Gentile group.[42] (Paul's aim, of course, in the letter, as has already been discussed,[43] was to present his full understanding of the gospel, which necessitated a strong defence of faith in Christ rather than law-observance; but at the same time, he was aware of the tendency towards Gentile superiority, which accounts for the other major emphasis within the letter).

So, in 7:1 when Paul says γινώσκουσιν γὰρ νόμον λαλῶ, he is speaking to virtually the whole church—Jews and Gentiles that have some experience of Judaism.[44] The purpose in the chapter, then, is to deal with a question in detail that has come up in his argument so far—given the negative role that Paul has outlined for the law, those familiar with the law in the church would be compelled to ask if, in fact, Paul is saying—"Is the law itself, then, sin?".[45]

Jewish synagogue, and that Gentile proselytes or "God-fearers" would have been attracted to a form of Judaism that was less tied to Jewish ethnic identity. Most of the Gentile members of the Roman church would have traditionally come from this background. In any case, as Moo points out, "new converts would have been exposed to the OT and the law early in their Christian instruction": D.J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 412.

[41] W.G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 309, refers to the possibility of seeing in Romans "essentially a debate between the Pauline gospel and Judaism".

[42] J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, xliv–liv, lxxi, proposes that the Roman community was well advanced in the development of a distinct identity apart from the Jewish community from which it had emerged, but that Paul was still concerned about the danger of a too-narrow Jewish perspective on the covenant, and so wanted to "free both promise and law for a wider range of recipients, freed from . . . ethnic constraints". D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 19, 21, maintains that as well as combating Gentile superiority, Paul also writes to criticise Jewish overemphasis on the law.

[43] See Chapter 6, 94f.

[44] Some consider Paul to be changing the audience he is addressing at this point in the letter—from the church as a whole to a more specifically Jewish sub-group. E.g. P.S. Minear, *The Obedience of Faith: The Purposes of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans*, 62, 64. There is, however, no need to posit this, if we take the whole audience to have some background in Judaism.

[45] Various writers have viewed Romans 7 as an "apology for the law" by Paul.

Paul's answer to this is very definitely in the negative because of his belief in the law's divine, spiritual origins (vv. 7, 14). But the problem that Paul wants to highlight is that the law has been hijacked by the power of Sin (v. 8). Because of this, the law can never give life, and those that live by it are "dead" (vv. 9–11). The law itself is good (vv. 12, 13), but it gets usurped by sin. Paul uses the Hellenistic moral reasoning of Ovid and others[46] to make the point that our willing and our doing are too often two separate matters, and that the external commandments of the law only seem to serve to produce the opposite effect of what they command us to do[47]—so weak is our flesh and so under the power of sin are we. Paul's argument in ch. 7, then, revolves around the relationship of the law to the power of Sin, and involves a detailed examination of the way in which the law and sin operate in a person's life. It is Paul's purpose, as we shall see, to demonstrate that the law, although not itself sin, is of no use whatsoever in enabling a person to live a life that is pleasing to God.

E.g. J.C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 105; G. Bornkamm, "Sin, Law and Death (Romans 7)" in *Early Christian Experience* (London, SCM, 1969), 88f.; R. Bultmann, "Romans 7 and the Anthropology of Paul" in *Existence and Faith*, 58f.; J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 377; W.G. Kümmel, *Römer*, 9ff.; K. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, 92.

[46] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 7.21, "The better course I see and approve, the worse I follow". Also Plato, *Protagorus* 352d, "most people . . . say that many, while knowing what is best, refuse to perform it"; Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 7.2, "The man . . . does not think the action right before he comes under the influence of passion"; Euripedes, *Hippolytus* 379–383, "That which is good we learn and recognise, yet practice not the lesson, some from sloth, and some preferring pleasure in the stead of duty". For these and other references, see n. 19. For an analysis of these classical parallels and key differences in Pauline thinking, see R.V. Huggins, "Alleged Classical Parallels to Paul's "What I want to do I do not, but what I hate, that I do" (Rom 7:15)" in *Westminster Theological Journal*, 54, 1992, 153–61. A. Van Den Beld, "Romans 7:14–25 and the Problem of Akrasia", in *Religious Studies*, 21, 1985, 495–515, also analyses and compares the weakness of will in Romans 7 and the classical parallels. C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 349, however, denies the alleged parallelism here, seeing the conflict in Romans 7 of the Spirit-filled believer with the law as having nothing to do with pagan morality. D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 457, like most commentators, is content that "Ovid's statements and Paul's statements are substantially the same". Similarly G. Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Thought*, 219, "Paul is to be seen in connection with ancient reflection on the contradiction between willing and doing".

[47] G. Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Thought*, 223, 224 suggests that it is Paul's contention that "The norms and models contained in the law themselves evoke behaviour contrary to the norm, even though their authentic purpose is to promote behaviour corresponding to the norm . . . Experience teaches that the more one is warned, the more the warnings provoke contrary tendencies. Limitations are precisely what makes desire wild".

During the course of this argument, as we have seen, a number of difficult questions arise in the task of interpretation. Who is the "I" that Paul talks about?[48] How do we interpret the phrase in v. 9, ἐγὼ δὲ ἔζων χωρὶς νόμου? What do we make of the tense change in v. 14, and to what time period do the passages 7–13 and 14–25 refer. And finally, a related question is: does the passage refer to Christian or pre-Christian experience?[49]

We have seen how those interpreters who take a more collective interpretation of the chapter tend to approach these questions, ruling out autobiography very largely on the basis of doubting that, in v. 9, there could ever have been a time in a Jew's life when he was χωρὶς νόμου; seeing the "I" as referring to the history of Israel in vv. 7–13; ruling out vv. 14–25 as referring to either the regenerate or unregenerate experience of the individual, on the basis that the passage is too negative for Paul to be referring to the former, and that the present tense rules out reference to the latter; and thus concluding that the "I" of vv. 14–25 depicts the on-going situation of Israel into the present time.

Despite the difficulties that the collective viewpoint sees in interpreting Romans 7 in a more individualistic light, it must be recognised that the whole passage does has a very personal ring about

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[48] The many various opinions offered on this include the "I" as autobiographical; as representing Adam; as representing "everyman", including, or possibly not including, Paul; as representing Israel; or as a combination of a number of these. For more details see the discussion below.

[49] Among defences of the pre-Christian interpretation are: G. Bornkamm, "Sin, Law and Death", 87–104; Chrysostom, "Homily 13", in *Epistolam ad Romanos*, vol. 9 of 13 (Paris, Apud Gaume Fratres, Bibliopolos, 1833); F.L. Godet, *Commentary on Romans*, 1879, reprint (Grand Rapids, Kregel, 1977), 292–293; R.H. Gundry, "The Moral Frustration of Paul before his Conversion", in D.A. Hagner and M.J. Harris (eds.) *Pauline Studies*, FS F.F. Bruce (Exeter, Paternoster, 1980), 228–245; E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 199–212; W.G. Kümmel, *Römer 7*; J. Lambrecht, "Man before and without Christ: Romans 7 and Pauline Anthropology", *Louvain Studies* 5 (1974), 18–33; B.L. Martin, "Some Reflections on the Identity of ἐγὼ in Rom. 7:14–25", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 34 (1979), 39–47. Chrysotom, Godet and Gundry see the "I" as describing simply Paul's own experience under the law prior to becoming a Christian. The others understand these verses to describe Jews under the law generally. Those who prefer a regenerate interpretation include: C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 151–53; D.A. Campbell, "The Identity of ἐγὼ in Romans 7:7–25", *Studia Biblia* III (Sheffield, JSOT, 1980), 57–64; C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1, 344–347; J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 387–389; J.I. Packer, "'The Wretched Man' in Romans 7", *Studia Evangelica II*, ed F.L. Cross (Berlin, 1964), 621–27. For an excellent summary of the pros and cons of each position, see D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 441–48.

it.[50] As Dahl suggests, "the element of personal confession in vv. 24–25a (cf. 14b–15, 18b–19) makes it difficult [to] acquiesce with the interpretation of the "I"-style as being simply a rhetorical device".[51] It is hard to imagine that Paul is not referring to himself, although that is not to rule out the "I" encompassing other groups as well. In fact the "I" probably refers to Paul and his readers, both Jews and Gentiles. Such a supposition seems to fit the rhetorical and didactic purpose of the text, as well as the obvious personal ring about it. If the text can be explained in keeping with this sense of the "I", then it is to be preferred to other interpretations of the "I" which exclude either Paul or one group or other of his readers.

Verses 7–13

The "I"—Paul and His Readers

In this section of the chapter, Paul both answers the question that his discussion of the law to date begs and effectively continues his criticism of the law by highlighting its negative effects. By making a specific prohibition, the law makes sin explicit. Furthermore, the very act of prohibiting seems to increase the attractiveness of the action. The law, then, seems to multiply and magnify sin. There is a sense in which, without the law "sin lies dead". So Paul asserts, ἐγὼ δὲ ἔζων χωρὶς νόμου ποτέ (v. 9). The only way in which Paul could here include both himself and his readers in anything other than a

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[50] In spite of the influential monograph by W.G. Kümmel, *Römer 7*, in which he effectively says that the "I" in the passage refers to everybody but Paul. Kümmel broke new ground by suggesting that the first person could be used simply as a rhetorical device, without an intended personal reference, and maintained that in Romans 7, Paul was talking about the situation of a person in general, faced with God's commands, as opposed to giving any reference at all to his own personal conversion biography. Despite the influence of Kümmel, several writers have continued to emphasise the marked personal feeling about the language in the chapter—e.g. J. Lambrecht, "Man before and without Christ", 31 "it still remains striking that Paul is speaking here in such a vivid, pathetic way"; J.I. Packer, "The 'Wretched Man in Romans 7", 621–627; R.H. Gundry, "The Moral Frustration of Paul before his Conversion: Sexual Lust in Romans 7:7–25", 228–245 sees Paul putting forward his own experience as typical in order to carry his argument with his readers, but makes the point that the experience remains fundamentally as Paul's.

[51] N.A. Dahl, "The Pauline Letters: Proposal for a Study Project of an SBL Seminar on Paul" (unpublished paper), 17 as quoted in R.H. Gundry, "The Moral Frustration of Paul before his Conversion: Sexual Lust in Romans 7:7–25", note 5.

representative sense is if he means here he was "alive" pre bar mitzvah[52] (son of the commandment);[53] that his Jewish readers were also alive at this time in their lives; and his Gentile readers were alive, in some sense, prior to coming to faith in Judaism.[54]

Gundry, a major recent proponent of the bar mitzvah theory to the background of these verses,[55] admits that a Jewish boy had a considerable amount to do with the law prior to his bar mitzvah[56] and so sees his theory working with reference to the specific prohibition to covet which is under discussion here by Paul. At puberty, the sexual aspect of coveting or "lusting" begins to become an issue for a boy, and so Gundry ties in this awakening of sexual desire to the newly confirmed obligation to the law's prohibitions at bar mitzvah. It is Paul's confrontation with the 10th commandment in particular that the apostle has in mind here and as his argument proceeds, but he clearly extrapolates to imply the complete failure of the law to give life.

This theory is not without its merits and appeal, but for the bar mitzvah theory to work, the prohibition to covet need not be restricted to sexual desire. It is surely significant, that Paul focuses attention

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[52] The Rabbinic teaching was that a Jewish boy at the age of 13 became a "son of the commandment"—W.D. Davies, *Paul & Rabbinic Judaism: Some Elements in Pauline Theology* (London, SPCK, 1958), 24–27.

[53] R.H. Gundry, "The Moral Frustration of Paul before his Conversion". Gundry argues strongly that the background to Paul's thinking here is his discovery at the time of puberty, around his bar mitzvah, of uncontrollable sexual urges within.

[54] R.H. Gundry, "The Moral Frustration of Paul before his Conversion", takes a different tack on this point. For him, Paul uses the "I" here because his bar mitzvah experience was not something that most of his readers, being Gentile, shared with him. Whereas elsewhere for shared experiences, Paul uses the plural personal pronoun, he deliberately uses the "I" here because it is his experience alone. There is, however, no requirement for Paul's use of the "I" to exclude his readers—it makes more sense if we can view it as both personal and also representative of all of Paul's readers at Rome.

[55] Others include, C.K. Barrett, *Romans*, 143–144; F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London, Tyndale, 1963, reprint, 1966), 147–149. Bruce feels that this interpretation "is the most natural way to understand this section, and the arguments against it are not conclusive"; C.H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 110–11; O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, MeyerK 4 (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955; 14th edn 1978), 148; J.A. Packer, "The 'Wretched Man' in Romans 7", 621–627 Other support is cited in J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 382, J.A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 464, and E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 195.

[56] The main objection to this line of thought is that it is hard to view a Jewish boy's life in any sense as being "apart from the law". So e.g. C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans Volume 1*, 343; E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 193; J.G.D. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 382; Kümmel, *Römer 7*, 81; J.A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 464.

on the 10th commandment, which concerns inner feelings and motivations. Prior to bar mitzvah, while a Jewish boy's life would have had considerable exposure to the law in his own life and the life of his family, it is, I think, not going too far to suggest that it would be around puberty that the inner implications of the law would have started to become important for the person. While the law and its effects on family life would have been evident to a child long before bar mitzvah time,[57] it would only be at this time he would have begun to be properly aware of the inner, personal implications of the law.[58] Dunn rightly points out that "It is most unlikely that a Jewish male of Paul's day could ever think of a period in his life when the law was absent",[59] but whilst the law would have been a recognised reality in every Jewish boy's life, the full meaning of the 10th commandment, in particular, would not have had much bearing on his life as a child. The world of uncontrollable passions is largely that of adulthood. It is significant, therefore, as Ziesler has pointed out, that Paul here chooses to concentrate on the commandment not to covet.[60] Paul highlights here covetousness as exemplifying the law—but it is a commandment that suits his argument and purpose perfectly. Covetousness is the one commandment which Paul can claim only springs to life when a child comes of age, and in a certain sense lies dormant before this, in the innocence of childhood.[61] As Gundry suggests, sexual desire is doubtless included in this, but Paul need not be limiting his idea of covetousness to this.[62]

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[57] J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 382, quotes evidence in Philo, *Legat.* 210; Josephus, *Ap.* 2.178 and a Jewish gravestone inscription noted in Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, 251 n. 52 that Jewish parents in Paul's day tried to teach the law to their children at an early stage.

[58] J. Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 187 admits that before puberty a Jewish boy was not personally responsible for observing the commandments, "and this could be what Paul is saying here".

[59] J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 382.

[60] J. Ziesler, "The Role of the Tenth Commandment in Romans 7", *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33, 1988, 41–56. Ziesler points out that the 10th commandment is the only one that really works in Paul's discussion about the inner struggle with sin. In vv. 14–25, commandments such as "do not kill" or "do not steal" just do not fit logically into the sort of inner struggle that Paul describes here.

[61] E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 193, believes the idea of childish innocence to be "completely unbiblical", but gives no real evidence of this.

[62] The tenth commandment is not taken in such a narrow sense in Exodus 20:17, or Deuteronomy 5:21. As J. Lambrecht, "Man Before and Without Christ", 23, points out "Paul . . . may have wanted to keep the prohibition as general as possible because in that way all illicit desires . . . are contained in it".

It is likely he had in mind the idea of inner desires and passions which were directed towards a broader range of sins. But importantly, Paul concentrates his whole sense of the law in this one commandment not to covet. The fundamental focus of the law comes down to what goes on inside a person, to how they deal with their inner desires. For Paul, the real test of keeping the law was the ability to live by its implications for the inner life.

This focus on a commandment with a distinctly inner aspect in this passage where Paul deals with the struggle with sin, highlights clearly for us the personal nature of sin in Paul's thinking, and alerts us to his understanding of salvation as having an important and fundamental personal application. Coveting is clearly a sin of the mind, a precursor to taking action, and is significantly the focus of Paul's attention when he discusses the way in which sin works. In a passage where Paul is explaining the relationship between sin and the law, it is significant that the way in which he does this is by concentrating on the effect of sin in the individual.[63] Personal soteriology is never far from his thinking.

For Paul and his Jewish readers, then, the time that they were without the law was prior to coming of age; for his Gentile readers (who have had a background associated with Judaism), it is clear that prior to this association with the synagogue, they lived outside of the Jewish law. There was a time, then, for both Paul and his two groups of readers when they could all be said to be without the law. So negative is Paul's view of the rôle of the law that, in fact, he can say that they were "alive" at this stage—even the Gentiles![64]

The Adam Story or the Story of Israel?

A considerable body of opinion considers these verses to refer to the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.[65] Proponents of this

[63] G. Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Thought*, 219f. regards Paul's use of the commandment not to covet to place him firmly alongside the ancient tradition of reflecting on the contradiction between willing and doing, and that personal "inner conflict" was a theme that Paul was well familiar with. Paul's reference to ἐπιθυμία directs our attention squarely on the "consciously experienced conflict within an individual."

[64] E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 194. Käsemann feels, however, it is not just "relative liveliness" that is meant here. "Apart from confrontation with the *nomos* a person really lived".

[65] R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, I (London, SCM, 1952), 250f.;

view suggest that it is only the story of Adam that fits the depiction of the "I" existing at a time before the commandment came, and that the whole scene here of innocence, commandment, sin "springing up", deception and consequent death matches perfectly the events in Genesis 3. In addition, it has been pointed out that in some strands of Jewish theology, Torah was thought of as present in some sense to Adam, and so the giving of the commandment to Adam not to eat of the fruit can be viewed as the coming of Torah.[66] Although there is a superficial similarity, the case for this is by no means wholly convincing. When Paul wants to refer to salvation history and the Adam story, he does so quite explicitly, as in ch. 5. This begs the question of why he should make such an oblique reference here, if this is his meaning. In addition, we must wonder why Paul chose to use the first person here, when elsewhere in the letter when he wants to refer to Adam, he does so quite explicitly?.[67] It is more satisfactory therefore to assume he is illustrating the point

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Bornkamm, "Sin, Law and Death", 87–104, 93; S. Lyonnet, "L'histoire du salut selon le ch.7 de l'epître aux Romains", *Biblica* 43, 1962, 117–51 (130ff.); J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 381–382. Dunn maintains that Paul uses "the Adam narrative to characterize what is true of man . . . in general, *every*man" (but asserts also, that "At the same time, there is an existential character throughout the whole section . . . and it is difficult to believe that Paul is not speaking at least to some extent out of his own experience"); J. Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 184, agrees that Adam is the model in these verses and so the "I" is typical and rhetorical, but that Paul uses himself as an example of someone (actually everyman) implicated in Adam's story; J Lambrecht, *The Wretched "I" and its Liberation* (Louvain, Peeters Press, 1992), 47; B. Lindars, "Paul and the Law in Romans 5–8: An Actantial Analysis" in B. Lindars (ed.), *Law and Religion* (Cambridge, CUP, 1988), 134; K. Stendahl, *Final Account*, 28; D.B. Garlington, "Romans 7:14–25 and the Creation Theology of Paul", *Trinity Journal* 11NS, 1990, 197–235, 207–211, feels that the passage refers clearly to the actions of the Serpent in the Eden story, and that Paul's bold argument here is designed to relegate the law "to the era of man's fall and its consequent ills"; E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 196—"There is nothing is the passage which does not fit Adam, and everything fits Adam alone". Kümmel, however, specifically rejected any references to the Adam story—*Römer 7*, 85ff.

[66] J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 379. Dunn quotes the rabbinical thinking of Torah as already existing prior to creation (*Tg. Yer* Gen 3:24; *Pal. Hag.* 2:77c; *Gen. Rab.* 8:2).

[67] E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 193. "Why does Paul use this stylized figure here . . . even though a Christian survey of the vanquished past could have been presented differently as in 1:18–3:20 and 5:12ff.?" But Käsemann concludes that we must revert to the "concept of corporate personality" (197), and that Paul is exemplifying the plight of every person's confrontation with the law by reference to the historical experience of Adam. J.A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 464, also questions why Paul "would refer to Adam as ego or introduce him into a text wherein he is not mentioned". Fitzmyer does not think that v. 9 demands the Adam interpretation.

he is making here about the way in which the law is used by sin to "kill", by reference to his and his readers' personal experience.[68]

The other major way that these verses are interpreted is with reference to Israel.[69] The coming of the commandment in this view is the advent of the Mosaic law at Sinai, and the "I" which was alive apart from the law refers to a, relatively speaking, alive Israel prior to this occasion.

Again, however, given the personal feel of the passage, we must doubt that this is what Paul meant to refer to. Once again, Paul elsewhere in the letter is quite explicit in his reference to Israel and its history (chs. 4; 9–11) and so one wonders why he would use such a device here.[70] In addition, given his predominantly Gentile audience, we must ask why he would bother to focus solely on Israel's relationship to the law, in this passage—something that would have little relevance to his Gentile readers. Proponents of the view that Paul is here discussing the relation of Israel to the law seek to show that ch. 7 should be integrated into Paul's overall discussion of the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's people, something which is dependent upon the salvation history of Israel. Wright, in particular, makes a convincing case for this, based on a continuity model which highlights the way in which the Messiah is the representative of Israel, fulfilling God's covenant demands and rightly relating both Jews and Gentiles who become related to him.[71] Chapter 7 in this model, then, deals with the way in which Torah has become ineffectual with regards to sin and obedience in the history of the Jews. Plausible as this is, again, the highly personal tone of the chapter militates

[68] P.W. Meyer, "The Worm at the Core of the Apple: Exegetical Reflections on Romans 7", in R.T. Fortna & B.R. Gaventa, eds., *The Conversation Continues. Studies in Paul and John* (FS J.L. Martyn; Nashville, 1990), 73, feels that commentators are forced to find allusion to the Fall in these verses because they cannot identify the experience readily in Paul's own personal experience. Meyer himself feels that the "commandment" in question here is "patently the Decalogue" although, he does admit to "an echo" of the Fall. The contention of this study is, however, that the use of the "I" most naturally indicates the experience of the writer and his audience and that this should provide the direction for our interpretation.

[69] See the discussion above of this more "corporate" interpretation for details of major exponents of this view.

[70] R.B. Hays, "Adam, Israel, Christ", in D.M. Hay & E.E. Johnson (eds.), *Pauline Theology: Volume III, Romans*, 68–86, 82 commenting on Wright's treatment of Romans 7, makes precisely this point, "If Paul is referring here to Israel, the people of God corporately, why does he not say so more explicitly?"

[71] N.T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul", 190–94.

against this approach and points us toward an explanation that is focused on Paul himself and his readers.

Ch. 7:7–13, then, is Paul's explanation of how the Law has operated in the past in the lives of both groups of readers in Rome and in his own life. He uses the personal pronoun because the experience is directly his own, but it can also be said to represent the experience of his readers as well. Paul denies that the law can be said to be sin, but he does not stint in his portrayal of the law as easily usurped by the power of sin in its deceitful and murderous rôle in the life of an individual, as witnessed by the past experience of both Paul and his readers.

Verses 14–25

Introduction: The Present Tense and the Personal Pronoun

There is a change of tense in v. 14, from present to past. Although Theissen, in his psychoanalytical interpretation of the chapter, sees the transition from past to present as reflecting a shift within the "I" from unconscious to conscious conflict with the law,[72] most commentators view it more simply as reflecting a discussion of a past experience of the law to an on-going one. There seem to be two basic ways in which interpreters understand the present experience of these verses.

Firstly, there are those like Dunn who understand Paul now to be speaking of the on-going struggle that the Christian experiences with sin, despite the positive power of the Spirit in his life.[73] According

[72] Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, 228–34.

[73] J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 403–412; idem, "Rom. 7:14–25 in the Theology of Paul", *Theologische Zeitschrift*, 31 (1975); also e.g. A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, 284–303; C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans Volume 1*, 358–370; J.I. Packer, "Wretched Man", 626; F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 150–156; J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1959, 1965), 257–73; D.B. Garlington, "Romans 7:14–25 and the Creation Theology of Paul, 197–235; D.S. Dockery, "Romans 7:14–25: Pauline Tension in the Christian Life", *Grace Theological Journal*, 2 (1981), 239–57. The shift to the present tense in vv. 14–25 is of key importance here, and the argument is that Paul is referring to his own present experience; it is also pointed out that the phrases "συνήδομαι γὰρ τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ" (v. 22), and "δουλεύω νόμῳ θεοῦ" (v. 25), along with the whole sense of the desire to obey the law in the passage, seem to indicate that the passage is about the believer who is intent on pleasing God, despite the struggle with sin that is described.

to this view, the Christian is caught in the tension of the ages, delivered by Christ, and yet still feeling the down-pull of indwelling sin. This solution serves to do justice to the present tense of the passage and takes seriously its autobiographical flavour. Applying vv. 14–25 to the life of the individual Christian, however, runs into the difficulty of being in conflict with the victorious Christian life described in chs. 6 and 8.[74] Christians there are ἐλευθερωθέντες ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας (6:18), and they are no longer ἐν σαρκὶ (8:9). Rather they "walk" κὰτα πνεῦμα (8:4) and are πνεύματι Θεοῦ ἄγονται (8:14). The contrast between the mode of life described in ch. 7 and that envisaged in ch. 8 is really rather stark. And, in fact, Paul describes those who are ἐν σαρκὶ (8:9) as not belonging to Christ at all. The person described from v. 14 of ch. 7 onwards is clearly someone ἐν σαρκὶ, whom Paul sets over against those set free by the Spirit of God. It is doubtful, then, whether Paul could be describing someone "in Christ" in ch. 7. Dunn copes with this by proposing an inner struggle between the powers of the present age and those of the age to come within the Christian. The description of the victorious life of the Christian in chs. 6 and 8, however, is so strong, that it is hard to feel completely comfortable with Dunn's attempt to harmonise with it the descriptions of distressingly unsuccessful Christian experience in ch. 7.

The second way in which the present tense of the passage is dealt with is by proposing that the verses refer to the on-going collective experience of Israel, still struggling under the law to please God, but unable to do so.[75] This has the merit of explaining the present tense

[74] J. Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 194. "it is hard to believe that Paul could use such negative and uncompromising language of Christians as 'sold under sin'". H. Ridderbos, *Commentaar op het Nieuwe Testment—Aan de Romeinen* (Kampen, Kok, 1959), 154, says flatly of the picture of the "I" described in ch. 7, "It would be absolutely absurd to insist that in depicting this state of death the apostle should allude to the status of the believer", quoted and translated by S. Voorwunde, "Who is the "wretched man" in Romans 7:24", *Vox Reforma*, 54 (1990), 11–26; D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 448, feels that the contrast between the sin-imprisoned ego in ch. 7 and the freed believer of chs. 6 and 8 is much too great to allow ch. 7 to be taken as referring to a Christian. K. von Kertelge, "Exegetische Überlegungen zum Verständnis der paulinischen Anthropologie nach Römer 7", *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 62 (1971), 105 gives a comprehensive listing of those who cannot see Romans 7 referring to the believer, including the Greek fathers, Althaus, Kürzinger, Dodd, Sanday-Headlam, Moffat and Wesley.

[75] E.g. D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 447–67 says (449) that "Paul's focus throughout this text is on the situation of the Jewish people under the Mosaic law",

but avoiding the conflict with chs. 6 and 8. The "I" of the passage, then, does not refer to Paul himself, but rather to his fellow-countrymen who are trapped under the law and unable to contend successfully with the power of sin. Furthermore, vv. 14–25 can be seen to be a continuation of the Jewish salvation history begun in vv. 7–13, where the initial coming of the law was in view. The problem is simply that the strongly personal flavour of the passage, especially the anguished ταλαίπωρος ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος of v. 24 is lost to a collective, representative explanation of the personal pronoun, and, as noted previously with regard to taking the "I" as representing Israel in vv. 7–13, Paul elsewhere in Romans is more explicit when he wants to refer to Israel's salvation history.

It may be possible, however, to resolve the difficulties of both these approaches and still do justice to the major features of the passage—i.e. the present tense and the strongly personal flavour.

The Danger of Falling Back into Law Observance

What Paul is doing in this passage is to discuss the reality of life lived by the law.[76] If he were to live by the law, the struggle that he describes in this passage would be his experience. The personal pronoun and the present tense are used here to heighten the drama of the struggle which Paul describes, but at the same time to highlight the potential application to both Paul and his readers, as I shall show.[77]

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but is detailed "in personal terms" (451); N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 227f.; also idem, "Romans and the Theology of Paul", 49–54, suggests that Paul moves from seeing Adam's sin worked out through the history of Israel in vv. 7–13 to a consideration of Israel's continuing life under Torah in the rest of the chapter; U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, 3 vols. (Neukirchen Vluyn, Neukirchener and Zürich, Benziger, 1978–81) 2.85, sees vv. 14–25 as depicting the continuing status of those (i.e. the Jews) involved in the past events which Paul has narrated in vv. 7–13.

[76] E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 199ff. takes the view that Paul is discussing the problem of "mankind . . . in its piety" (199), where living under the law represents the general problem of attempts by human beings (whether Jew or Gentile) to live according to the will of God through their own efforts. This disregards the specific reference of νόμος to Torah, and, as most scholars post-Sanders would admit, takes an unwarranted interpretive step far beyond what the text actually says. When Paul talks here of life lived by the law he has in mind specifically his immediate readers and thus the Jewish Torah.

[77] The debate in the literature has been intense as to whether Paul uses the "I" in this passage to refer to Christian or pre-Christian experience. See note 49 for more details on this. The argument of this study is that the "I" certainly refers to Paul's own experience under the law; but it also refers to his readers' experience

Paul is σάρκινός (v. 14),[78] and, leaving Christ out of the picture for the sake of argument, his natural state is that of being πεπραμένος ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν. If Paul were trying to live by the law and to keep its commandments, he would not be able to do so—he would fall into the problem outlined in vv. 7 and 8. An external commandment, albeit a good one, and one that has a divine origin, simply encourages a negative response, such is the weakness of human flesh (v. 15) and the indwelling (v. 17) power of sin. A life lived without the spirit of Christ, no matter how well intentioned, is simply powerless to κατεργάζεσθαι τὸ καλὸν.

Paul uses the personal pronoun, then, to emphasise the situation in which both he and his readers would find themselves, were it not for their new circumstances in Christ. (Again, I am assuming that this has a direct reference to both Paul and his Jewish readers because of their obvious pre-Christian experience of the law, and his Gentile readers, because of their experience of the law during their Jewish "God-fearing" period). Before Christ, the situation both Paul and his readers were in, living as they did "under the law", is the one Paul describes in vv. 14–25. Several commentators have referred to the apparent conflict between the struggle described in these verses and the seeming self-satisfaction with his life in Judaism noted by Paul in Philippians 3:2–11,[79] and have concluded that Paul cannot therefore

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living by the law; and, in addition, to the situation they would find themselves in were they to go back to living in such a way.

[78] By this, I take Paul to be referring simply to the frailty of the human condition; this is in stark contrast to the divine origin of Torah, on the other hand, which he states to be "spiritual". (Elsewhere, in 1 Cor. 10:3,4, Paul uses the word πνευματικός to signify divine origin). Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, however, sees this verse as pointing to the connection of the "I" to the "old epoch" of sin and death, notwithstanding its redemption. Dunn views vv. 14–25 as highlighting the tension produced in the redeemed "I" as a result of the overlap of the ages. Others take σάρκινός not in the neutral sense of creaturely weakness and dependence, but in a more pejorative sense—J. Lambrecht, "Man Before and Without Christ", 24, 25, invokes "the specific Pauline concept of sinful weakness". Also A. Sand, *Der Begriff "Fleisch" in den paulinischen Hauptbriefen*, Bibl. Unter. (Regensburg, Pustet, 1967), 303–305. Bearing in mind, however, what Paul goes on to say about slavery of the self to sin, and the real problem being sin (v. 17), rather than the self per se, it is enough to see σάρκινός as simply referring to human weakness. D. Wenham, "The Christian Life: A Life of Tension? A Consideration of the Nature of Christian Experience in Paul" in D.A. Hagner & M.J. Harris (eds.), *Pauline Studies*, 80–94, 82, also views the use of σὰρξ here as being morally neutral, and that it is not therefore likely that Paul is referring to the life of the Christian in the morally negative sense that we get in Dunn's interpretation.

[79] E.g. E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 443, 479; E. Käsemann, *Commentary*

be referring to himself. The seeming tension between the two passages, however, is easily resolved, in that the boasts that Paul makes in Philippians 3 regarding his observable law-compliant behaviour are ones that could all still be made, even with a difficult inward struggle with desire going on.[80] In Philippians, Paul is highlighting his Jewish status, as opposed to his inner experience, which is the subject of his discussion in this passage.[81]

Furthermore, however, if Paul or his readers chose now to go back to law observance, then this is the position they would find themselves in once again. Paul's argument in ch. 8, where he contrasts life ἐν πνεύματι and life ἐν σαρκὶ, contemplates the real danger of the Romans falling back into φόβος (v. 15). It is this danger, presumably, that Paul has in mind—Judaising was not currently a problem in Rome, but Paul's explanation of the gospel throughout Romans constantly serves to warn against its dangers.

Paul knows his human weakness; the fact of indwelling sin—and hence the ever-present danger of looking to anything but the spirit of Christ for inner power to serve God. The law, beloved by his fellow Jews, and promoted by Judaising Christians must never become a force again in the lives of the Romans—it has no power for life. The use of the present tense here highlights the danger to the Roman Christians still posed by the law.[82]

Several commentators have already drawn attention to this interpretation of the passage. Lambrecht suggests that, "It may be true that Paul is depicting the wretched man in order to warn his fellow-Christians not to fall back into the former unregenerate state".[83] Lambrecht, however, discusses this against an understanding of the law-observance against which Paul is warning as "a pre-Christian,

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on Romans, 192, says categorically, "We do not have an autobiographical reminiscence . . . This is refuted by Phil 3:6"; K. Stendahl, *Final Account*, 3; idem, "Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West", 81, 92, 94 also appeals to Phil. 3 to support the claim that Paul experienced no inner struggle with conscience and that Romans 7 does not refer as such to a personal struggle with sin.

[80] Gundry, "The Moral Frustration of Paul", 233, 234; J. Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 183.

[81] D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 450.

[82] B. Lindars, "Paul and the Law in Romans 5–8", 126–40, esp. 140, points out that in Romans, Paul explores closely the question of the rôle of the law in salvation, precisely because of the interest of the Judaising party in imposing the law on Gentile converts.

[83] J. Lambrecht, "Man Before and Without Christ", 33.

Pharisaic mentality which presumes to gain salvation through his own works". Lambrecht takes vv. 14–25 to be a picture of "man before and without Christ"—a pre-Christian man under the law, as evaluated by a Christian. It is obvious, however, that Lambrecht takes Judaism to be a meritorious works-religion, and that it is this that Paul is warning the Romans of falling back into. There is value, however, in his basic proposition, even if we feel uncomfortable in going along with him in his pre-Sanders evaluation of Judaism. Lambrecht takes the present tense of the passage, as does this argument, to indicate the present experience of a person living by the law, and the personal pronoun to highlight both Paul's experience in the past as an observant Jew and the very real possibility, for him, of slipping back into law-observance. There is no need to qualify law-observance by "in order to gain salvation" for the basic proposition to work. In a situation where the relation of Gentiles to Judaism within Christian thinking was still an open question, the possibility of the Roman Gentiles being persuaded at some stage of the need for Jewish observance was all too real. This was a possibility, of course, to which Paul was implacably opposed.

Grossouw also has highlighted the way in which the passage was to serve as a warning to Paul's readers against falling back into law-observance. He suggests that the use of the first person indicates that the verses refer directly to Paul's own past experience and his present potential: "Paul would not have been able to picture in Rom 7 the human situation in such an authentic and dramatic way, if he had not experienced it as his own possibility, and this not only as an (eventually) actualized possibility of his Jewish past but also as a yet real possibility which could pervert also Christian existence".[84] Hoekema, too, has drawn attention to this possible interpretation of the passage. He suggests that vv. 14–25 refer to the "struggle of the unregenerate man (*or the regenerate man when he tries to 'go it alone'*)".[85] Hoekema takes the law-observance again to refer to human effort to overcome sin and gain salvation, and sees the passage as referring generally to the "unregenerate man" who tries to please God through his own efforts. Once again, although we may find this position now

[84] W.K. Grossouw, "De verscheurde mens van Romeinen zeven" in *Vriendengave Bernardus Kardinaal Alfrink aangeboden* (Utrecht, 1964), 80.

[85] A.A. Hoekema, *The Christian Looks at Himself* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1975), 62 (my italics).

to be discredited, nevertheless, Hoekema alerts us to the possibility that the verses speak to their readers of the danger of slipping back from life in the Spirit. Hoekema highlights for us the possibility of one who has moved on from law-observance to faith in Christ, accompanied by freedom from the slavery to sin, moving back to a situation of "going it alone". This, suggests Hoekema, is not the "normal life of the believer". Hoekema has generalised the very particular argument that Paul is making here to his Roman readers in a way that is not appropriate—Paul is speaking specifically of the issue of Jewish Torah-observance for Roman Christians—yet he serves to focus our attention on the function of the passage in Paul's argument. Paul here uses the present tense and the first person to make the struggle he depicts an immediate possibility for both himself and his readers. Similar also are the positions taken by Kertelge and Ridderbos, who see vv. 14–25 describing a pre-Christian struggle with the law which has the potential of returning to threaten the Christian.[86]

Paul is under no illusions as to the power of sin at work within him—τὸ κακὸν παράκειται (v. 21); captivity to τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου (v. 23); ἕτερον νόμον ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου (v. 23). Without Christ, he is a ταλαίπωρος, needing deliverance from a σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου (v. 24). These expressions do not, as we have noted Dunn and others maintain, describe the on-going situation of the Christian[87]—caught in the tension of the ages, delivered by Christ, and yet still feeling the down-pull of indwelling sin—rather they describe the human situation without the redemptive power of Christ. Paul is here describing the very real situation he (and his readers) found themselves in prior to Christ's deliverance—struggling to do what was right, because the law had shown them clearly what was right, and yet unable to succeed, because of the power of sin at work within.[88] In addition, however, the con-

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[86] Kertelge, "Exegetische Überlegungen zum Verständnis der paulinischen Anthropologie nach Römer 7," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 62 (1971), 108–109, 112; H.N. Ridderbos, *Paul, An Outline of his Theology* (London, SPCK, 1977), 269–70, 130.

[87] See note 73.

[88] Some scholars suggest that the emphasising αὐτὸς in the phrase αὐτὸς ἐγὼ in v. 25 should be rendered "I myself, without Christ". The verse would then clearly identify the "I" as pre-Christian. These include E. Gaugler, *Der Römerbrief: Kapital 1–8* (Zürich, Zwingli, 1945; repr. 1958), 240–44; C.L. Mitton, "Romans 7 Reconsidered", *Expository Times* 65 (1953–54), 133–34; J.A.T. Robinson, *Wrestling with*

tention here is that Paul also viewed a struggle with sin because of reliance upon the law as a very present danger for Christians in his day, and the Romans in particular.

In ch. 8, Paul goes on to show how life "in Christ" has brought deliverance from the dilemma that those previously trying to please God through the law found themselves in. The law of sin and death (8:2) at work within no longer holds believers down. Those who live κατὰ πεῦμα now know ζωὴ καὶ εἰρήνη (8:6) and are able to Θεῷ ἀπέσαι (v. 8). Paul urges his readers, then, to live and be led by the Spirit (8:13, 14); they must not "fall back into fear" (8:15) and take on, again a πνεῦμα δουλείας.

In 7:14–25, then, Paul presents what is an evaluation of life "under the law". It is what his own life was like prior to meeting Christ—hence the very personal and urgent tone, and the use of the "I". It was also what the lives of his readers—Jews and God-fearing Gentiles—were like before they accepted Christ. But the use of the present tense warns of the dangers of slipping back into the boundaries of this previous life. It is a life of slavery, of powerlessness, and only the power of God, working through Christ, brings deliverance.

The Immature Christian?

The position taken here is to be clearly distinguished from a few writers who take the passage to refer to an immature Paul, immediately after his conversion, at a time when he was only learning the life of the Spirit, and was still seeking, unsuccessfully, because of the power of sin at work within him, to observe the law. Those who understand the passage in this way typically take it to represent

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Romans (London, SCM, 1979), 89–91. There is no compulsion, however to translate the phrase in this way as notes D.A. Campbell, "The Identity of ἐγὼ in Romans 7:7–25", 61. As J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 397, notes, the way this phrase is translated comes more by line of interpretation than by the force of the words themselves. This is, for example borne out by the way in which C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 359 n. 4 makes the text support his contention that Romans 7:14–25 refers to the Christian's struggle. He says that Paul is not here stating "what is true apart from Christ's intervention", but rather underlines "the full personal involvement of the Christian". Although J. Kürzinger, "Der Schlüssel zum Verständnis von Röm 7", *Biblische Zeitschrift* 7 (1963), 272, supports the contention that the meaning "I myself, without Christ" cannot be taken from the wording itself, he admits that the issue is far from clear and could come from the context. The argument that the verses refer to a person's struggle without the power of Christ's Spirit, however, does not rely on the way in which this phrase is rendered.

all immature believers. Thus Romans 7 "describes the abject misery and failure of a Christian who attempts to please God under the Mosaic system".[89] Such approaches take the passage to be a warning to Christians not to try by their own efforts to keep the legal code of the law, but rather to move into the life of the Spirit, where alone is power for Christian living.[90] The suggestion here is that Paul is giving us a picture of the "carnal" believer. This is essentially the position of Bruce, Longenecker and Wenham, who view vv. 14–25 as describing the believer living without the power and aid of the Spirit.[91] These scholars suggest that Paul is here describing a life that is often that which is experienced by Christians, but, nevertheless, is not the ideal. What is ideal, and what needs to be appropriated by the believer is the life of victory in the Spirit, as described in ch. 8. By adopting this approach, one steers a sort of middle ground between the difficulties involved in attributing the passage to either Christian or pre-Christian experience. The present tense evidence which seems to point to the current experience of the Christian is preserved; the behaviour pattern which seems so typically pre-Christian can be taken to refer to the Christian; and the difficulties in reconciling the low level of Christian success to which the passage then points with the victory of chs. 6 and 8, are avoided. Now the passage can refer to Christian experience, but not *ideal* Christian experience.

There is no evidence, however, that Paul had any understanding of such a category of believer; in addition, the sense of the law representing own-efforts legalism is inherent in this view. This is quite different from the position currently being taken on these verses, which, it is suggested, simply serve as a warning against slipping back into law-observance—this view requires no application of the text beyond the specific group to which Paul was writing, and makes no judgement on Judaism as a works-religion.

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[89] S.D. Toussaint, "The Contrast Between the Spiritual Conflict in Romans 7 and Galatians 5", *Bibliotheca Sacra* 123 (1966), 312.

[90] Typical of this approach is R.Y.K. Fung, "The Impotence of the Law: Toward a Fresh Understanding of Romans 7:14–25", in *Scripture, Tradition and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1978), 35.

[91] F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit* (Exeter, Paternoster, 1977), 198; R.N. Longenecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty* (New York, Harper, 1964), 116; D. Wenham, "The Christian Life: A Life of Tension?", 89.

Summary of Positions Reviewed

To recap briefly at this point, scholars have coped with the present tense and the personal flavour of vv. 14–25 in a variety of ways. Some have suggested that the passage refers to the on-going experience of the Christian, including Paul, redeemed by Christ, but still caught in sinful humanness. Others, sensing the problem this presents with chs. 6 and 8, though still wanting to maintain the personal aspect of the language, interpret the verses as referring to Paul's (and hence all Christians') immature Christian experience, where there is still an attempt to please God by keeping the law. This results in the struggle with sin described in the passage, which represents less than ideal Christian experience. Still other scholars (mostly pre-Sanders) deal with the struggle in the passage by proposing that it refers to the pre-Christian experience of Paul and others who tried unsuccessfully to keep the law, the law in this view usually representing human efforts to please God. This view tries to accommodate the autobiographical and personal tone of the passage, but is less successful with the present tense. The final view we have considered, much favoured recently, interprets the passage as referring to the present experience of Israel. This does more justice to the present tense, and avoids any conflict with chs. 6 and 8, but takes away the strongly personal force of much of the language by making us take Paul's use of the "I" here to be representative of Israel. None of these interpretations, it seems, is wholly satisfactory, in that none copes entirely with both the present tense and the use of the "I".

Summary of the Argument in verses 14–25

The real point of Romans 7 is that Paul is completing the criticism of the law which has run so far throughout Romans[92] (cf. 3:19–20, 27–28; 4:13–15; 5:13–14, 20). On the one hand, he wants to defend the law,[93] as a God-given gift, from charges of "being sin", but cannot

[92] D.J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 409. "Rom. 7 provides the extensive treatment and explanation of the negative effects of the Mosaic law that Paul has briefly mentioned several times in the letter".

[93] An "apology for the law" is considered to be the theme of the section by a number of scholars: J.C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 105; R. Bultmann, "Romans 7 and the Anthropology of Paul," 147–157, 58f.; G. Bornkamm, "Sin", 88ff.; W.G. Kümmel, *Römer 7*, 9ff.; K. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, 92.

leave his readers with any real positive attitude to it.[94] So he contrasts the previous way of life of both himself and his readers with their present spiritual, victorious, alive existence through the Spirit in Christ. Paul has paid a great deal of attention to the antithesis of law and faith earlier in the letter; here he completes the contrast by an analysis of actual practical effects of each in an individual's life. (Paul goes on, of course to give us a description of life lived by faith in Christ in ch. 8, a life that is victorious and free of the struggle which he has portrayed in ch. 7). Paul's criticism of the law in Romans is acute. It cannot bring justification or salvation (chs. 2–4); neither can it give any practical help to an individual in seeking to please and follow God[95] (ch. 7).

It has been Paul's intention from ch. 5 to describe the result of the justification brought about by the gospel in the life of the individual.[96] Chapter 7 serves two purposes—it is a parenthesis dealing with the question naturally raised by Paul's discussion of the law i.e. "is the law sin"?—and it serves to set in stark contrast the new life in Christ of the believer set forth in ch. 8 with the old way of life, by the description of the individual struggle with sin due to human weakness and the inability of the law to help, and thus acts as a warning to the Romans against falling back into law-observance. Paul proceeds from locating the individual in salvation history in ch. 5—hopelessly trapped in the sin introduced into the world by Adam, but with the possibility of freedom and justification through Christ—to a discussion of the way in which a justified individual can be free

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[94] B. Lindars, "Paul and the Law in Romans 5–8", 134, 139, rightly comments that Paul's vindication of the law on the grounds of its divine origin, is not done at the expense of the negative rôle the law plays in the life of the "flesh" and in revealing sin.

[95] B. Lindars, "Paul and the Law in Romans 5–8", 126, refers to ch. 7 as being "the haunting account of Paul's agonising inability to observe the Jewish law, in spite of his honest desire to do so".

[96] J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 301 sees chs. 5–8 as having a primary reference to the individual. In particular, chs. 6–8 for Dunn contain Paul's thinking on the outworking of the gospel of faith that he has discussed up until the end of ch. 4 of the letter. After a "basic statement of the gospel", Paul proceeds to outline "how all this worked out in daily practical living for a Christian" (325). Similar views are taken by C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans Volume 1*, 254ff.; J.A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 405ff.; 429ff.; A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, 187–189. This, of course, is in quite distinct contrast to the writers reviewed under "Collective Interpretations" above. As we have seen, scholars such as Wright prefer to see chs. 5ff. as much more integrated to the overall covenantal framework of the letter, still dealing with the participation of Gentiles as well as Jews in God's great plan of salvation.

from death, sin and the law.[97] Chapter 8 concludes this section with the glorious exultation in the possibility of life in the Spirit. Chapter 7 thus plays its part by showing decisively that the law has no rôle to play in successful Christian living.[98] This is a message that was integral to Paul's gospel and that he viewed as essential to the presentation of the gospel to the Roman Christians.

So, in vv. 14–25, Paul details for us the struggle that goes on in the person who is trying to please God without the power of the Spirit of Christ, and only the Jewish law for assistance. This struggle is essentially an inner struggle, one that is fundamentally cognitive and mental. The struggle that Paul describes is based around ἐπιθυμία and the commandment not to covet. He talks about wishing to do good (vv. 15–20); about an inner attitude towards the law of God (v. 22); and about a struggle between his bodily passions and his own thoughts (v. 23). This was a struggle that Paul's contemporaries understood very clearly.[99] That Paul, in his attempt to discuss the (lack of) rôle for the law in the believer's life, chooses to describe an inner struggle between best intention and actual practice, which, given the evidence of the classical and Hellenistic writers, was common experience in Paul's world, and also one with which we in our modern world understand well too, suggests strongly to us that there is not the difference in self-understanding between first century Mediterranean people and ourselves that Malina and others make out. We see again, here, the same basic human self-conscious individualism for which has been argued throughout. Paul's understanding of the gospel, whilst he was concerned with people-groups, had a primary focus on the individual. We have discussed in previous chapters how Paul understood the need for individual, personal faith in Christ as the basic entry requirement to the people of God; in chs. 6–8, we see that he understands the gospel's power to be outworked

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[97] J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 242. Dunn quotes the influential analysis of A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, 187–349, which categorises chs. 5–8 as follows: 5—Freedom from the Wrath of God; 6—Freedom from Sin; 7—Freedom from the Law; 8—Freedom from death.

[98] D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 409, says that 8:3a, "What the law could not do because it was weakened by the flesh" "succinctly sums up" the powerlessness of the law with regards to sanctification, despite its divine origin; B. Lindars, "Paul and the Law in Romans 5–8", 140, comments that the law can only play "an ancillary role in the process of salvation, because law by itself is powerless against the force of sin, backed up by human desires and passions and self-will".

[99] See note 19 above.

in individual's lives, through the presence of the Spirit—and in ch. 7, he is at pains to point out the failure of the law to play any part in this. And to do so, his argument proceeds at the level of the individual self without Christ—struggling with sin, divided between good intention and actual action, and failing miserably.

Conclusions: Romans 7—Personal & Collective Aspects

To summarise, then, the position we have arrived at in this analysis of Romans 7. We do not have here a discussion of the law as a sociological symbol no longer legitimated by God and no longer able to offer social cohesion to the emerging Christian group; nor do we have an attempt by Paul to discredit the law in order to push the Jewish group at Rome closer to the Gentile Christians; nor is it solely about group exclusivism and religious covetousness; nor, primarily about discounting the law as the means of Gentile inclusion in the people of God; nor is it an analysis of the salvation history of Israel and the story of her continued disobedience. We have considered all these possibilities which focus primarily on corporate matters and have found them to be inadequate.

The overtly personal tone of the passage with the heavy use of the first person pronoun points us primarily towards understanding Paul's argument as concerning first of all himself, but also his immediate readers. We may want to extrapolate Paul's experience to a wider group, but our first level of interpretation must take seriously the immediate relevance of what Paul is saying. Paul is dealing here with the inability of the Jewish law to enable a person to please God. This is a necessary step in his explanation in Romans of his understanding of the gospel, where up to this point he has been concerned to show how all people, both Jew and Gentile alike can share in the people of God in Christ. The Jewish law, he has shown, has no longer any place in defining this people—this is now done by faith in Christ. As he proceeds to discuss the freedom that the people of God experience from sin and death in their lives, he must again deal with the issue of the rôle of the law. Is it of any benefit or necessity in dealing with sin and living in a way that is pleasing to God? And if not, is it, itself, in fact, sin? These are the questions to which Paul addresses himself in ch. 7.

In order to make his argument compelling he appeals to the per-

sonal experience of, first of all, himself, but also that of his readers.[100] In that sense, then, the "I" in the passage can be said to be representative. But it is also primarily autobiographical; and because it is representative of Paul's primary readership group, it retains its very personal sense.

The reading of Romans 7, then, here has been with this personal sense in mind. Because the focus is on the autobiographical reality of what Paul is saying, this interpretation is, to some degree in agreement with Augustine, the Reformers and commentators like Nygren, Cranfield and Dunn. The reading of this thesis, however, differs from these scholars, though, in that typically those that take an autobiographical approach to vv. 14–25 will see the passage as referring to Paul's present experience as a Christian. This is the position one seems to be forced into, if one assumes that Paul is using the "I" to refer to himself, because of the present tense of the passage. If Paul is referring to himself when he speaks of the struggle of the divided self with sin, and does so using the present tense, must we not, then, of necessity, take his argument to apply to his situation as a Christian? This is the logic which Dunn and others acknowledge. Yet in doing so, they must deal with the difficulty of a seemingly different reality for the Christian outlined by Paul in chs. 6 and 8. Here the Christian is portrayed as νεκροὺς τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ and ζῶντας τῷ θεῷ (6:11), as having been ἐλευθερωθέντες ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας (6:18) by the Spirit of life, and as "more than conquerors" (8:37). The difference between the Christian experience here and in ch. 7 must be accounted for. The only logical way of doing this is to posit an ongoing struggle in the Christian who is caught between the two ages—the age of Adam and sin, and the age of Christ and life. The "Now/Not yet" tension of the ages.

The contention of this study, however, is that it is not necessary to have to resort to this explanation whilst holding to an autobiographical explanation of the passage. If we simply understand Paul to be talking about what would be true of him, were he to choose to live under the law, and not in the power of Christ, then we do not require this elaborate theory of the tension of the ages and we

[100] B. Lindars, "Paul and the Law in Romans 5–8", 140. "The use of the first-person singular in 7:7–25 adds great force at a climactic point in the argument. Though Paul speaks out of his own experience, it is experience . . . with which his readers can readily identify".

can reconcile the passage with Paul's very positive and victorious picture of the Christian elsewhere in Romans. As has previously been argued, Paul simply uses the present tense to illustrate the present potential of slipping back into law observance.

The "I", however is not to be read simply autobiographically, but should be seen as having an immediate application to Paul's Roman readership, both Jewish and Gentile. Both groups, as we have seen, have been in the situation Paul describes in vv. 14 –25, seeking to live by the law, but finding in it no power to enable the self to do good. Paul's description of the self in this situation serves as a grave warning to his readers of the dangers of slipping back into a law-observant religion. The passage is, then, effectively a continuation of Paul's discussion and criticism of the law to the Romans, something which he viewed as a vital element of the presentation of his gospel—even in a situation where he was also seeking to counter Gentile superiority. So concerned is Paul about the dangers of a Christianity which relied on the law and not exclusively on Christ, and so convinced is he that no presentation of his gospel would be complete without this, that he spends a great deal of time discussing this in chs. 1–7 in a letter in which he is also clearly concerned about Gentiles throwing off their Jewish roots.

In the sense that the "I" is taken to represent the Jewish experience of seeking to observe the law, we are in agreement with Moo, Wright and others. The logic of the position of these scholars is that they typically cannot reconcile the despairing struggle with sin in ch. 7 with the victory of chs. 6 and 8, if they were to be taken to refer to the life of the Christian. Given this, the only way that they can explain the present tense of the passage is to suggest that Paul is using the "I" to represent the on-going situation of Israel, struggling to be victorious, whilst living by the law. If the "I" cannot refer to Paul's own present experience, then he must be using the personal pronoun representatively of his fellow countrymen. This is an attractive option, since it is possible to take v. 9 to refer to Israel's history prior to Sinai, and therefore, the whole chapter seems to make sense as a treatise on the experience of Israel and the law, both her history and her present experience. The difficulty, however, is the use of the present pronoun as a device by Paul to discuss Israel, when this is not something he does elsewhere in Romans. We run into the same difficulty if we try to interpret vv. 7–13 with reference to the story of Adam. The clearly personal feel of the language

suggests strongly that Paul is referring directly to himself. If so, then the suggestion that Paul is speaking primarily about Israel and hence using the "I" in a collective sense, becomes very difficult. If, however, we recognise the primary referent of "I" is Paul, but also that he is being inclusive of his immediate readers, then we can be truer to the personal sense of the passage. So, in vv. 7–13, Paul is referring to his own, and his readers' experience of the law in their lives in the past; and in vv. 14–25, Paul refers to the struggle of the self with sin when seeking to live under the law, using the present tense to refer to the continuing danger for both himself and the Romans of living under the law, as opposed to living in the Spirit.

This reading of the passage, which relates the "I" primarily to Paul himself and his immediate readers, once again highlights the personal, as opposed to collective aspects of Paul's argument in Romans. In a passage where Paul is seeking to complete his criticism of the law, he does so by reference to the negative personal experience of both himself and his readers. The way he goes about denying the law any rôle in salvation is not to discuss it in broad sociological terms, relating it to people groups, but rather to focus specifically on the difficulty that any one individual person has, in seeking to live by it. He discusses, then, the very individual and personal struggle that each person has in order to do what is right and good, in one's own natural state of fleshly weakness, without the power of Christ, and only the guidance of the written commandment. In doing this, Paul takes recourse to the 10th commandment, which has to do with individual, inner desire. The issue could not be made more personal—for Paul and each of his Roman readers, they each faced a personal struggle with sin whilst living by the law, and would do so again, were they to forsake their exclusive commitment to Christ. The personal agony and despair of v. 24, in particular, is not to be missed—Paul himself has experienced this inner turmoil and sense of personal failure, and himself has experienced the joy of liberation by the power of the Spirit of Christ (v. 25).

A straightforward, simple reading of Romans 7 finds its primary relevance to be to inner conflict and the individual struggle with sin. Our reading of the passage finds this immediate sense of the passage to be correct, and that it is possible to resolve the difficulties of the change in v. 14 to the present tense and the proposed conflicts with Romans 6 and 8 and still maintain this primary sense of the individual in the chapter. More collective ways of interpreting the

text only serve to obscure the argument that Paul progresses here about the inability of the law to give a person life. As we have seen with the other passages we have reviewed, Paul's argument works primarily at the level of the individual, where it is the individual who struggles with sin within and the sense of what he ought to do, and the difficulty with the law is primarily that it will not give an individual any power to live more successfully. Paul once again has the individual and personal aspects of salvation clearly in his mind.

CHAPTER TEN

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This investigation has sought to examine how much Paul had the individual in mind in the first eight chapters of Romans. Recent approaches to New Testament study have, quite rightly, given much more attention than ever before to the socio-historical situation in which the texts were originally written and read, and have often sought to find useful tools by which to do this by recourse to the disciplines of sociology and social anthropology. In addition, in the New Perspective that has emerged in Pauline studies, interpretations of Paul have become much more focused on Paul's concern with the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the people of God, and less on the issue of faith versus works in the life of an individual.

While both these factors have resulted in much benefit in understanding the Pauline texts, there has been something of an imbalance in recent years, where the implications of Paul's arguments for the individuals in the churches to which he wrote, and, indeed, we might say, for the individual in general, have been either neglected or dismissed. It is the contention of this thesis, that not only are there implications for the individual in what Paul has to say, but that it was his intention to address the individual.

There has been an attempt, therefore, to demonstrate that, from a historical, sociological and social anthropological point of view, there is no reason to deny the interest of Paul, a man of the first century Mediterranean world, in the individual; indeed, there is every reason to suppose that he would have had a lively interest in the personal implications of the gospel of Christ. From this basis, then, three texts within the first eight chapters of Romans have been examined to see if it might reasonably be concluded that Paul's argument had the individual in mind, rather than simply broad "macro" issues, such as the identity of the people of God.

Part I: The Self and Individuality in the Hellenistic World

In Part I of this study, there was an examination of the nature of the self and individuality in the Hellenistic world, to see whether the self could be said to be essentially different from the way in which we currently think of it, or, if in fact, the first century people of Paul's world typically thought of themselves in a much more group-embedded way. First of all it was important to take a critical look at the disciplines of sociology and social anthropology which have become important to many New Testament scholars to see how these disciplines might prompt us to think of the Hellenistic self.

What emerged from this study was that many recent research studies in the area of social anthropology question the conclusions of previous research in this discipline, from earlier in the century, which characterises primitive peoples or ancient peoples as having little or no sense of individuality and portrays the individual as wholly embedded in the group. Furthermore, a number of studies on the nature of what is termed "culture" call into question the simplistic idea that the individual's behaviour is determined by social forces characterised by "culture". Neurological and cognitive research, in particular, points to the importance of the way in which any one individual processes the social interactions and information which forms his life experience.

This sort of evidence has prompted a number of social scientists, including social anthropologist Anthony Cohen, to think of the individual as an active processor of culture. Culture and the structures and contexts of public social behaviour simply provide a framework in which individuals operate dynamically, and pro-actively, rather than predetermining their behaviour. It is the culture-processing and interpretive self, then, that has primacy, Cohen argues, rather than the collective. Furthermore, Cohen argues that this is true for individuals in any culture, at any time, and that to characterise ancient people or primitive people as having any less proactive or dynamic selves is to be guilty of the worst sort of Western superiority.

Cohen's insistence on individual self-consciousness as the defining characteristic of humanness provides a telling critique of the social science disciplines, which, he maintains, have an in-built and necessary bias toward the social over the individual. The conclusion, then, from this part of the study is that, because these disciplines which have been appealed to considerably by New Testament scholars in

recent years, have often displayed an emphasis on the determining power of the social upon the self to the detriment of a proper understanding of the individual, it is necessary to exercise caution when applying methods and insights from them to the study of the New Testament. In addition, the specific research considered with regards to culture suggests that we should beware of treating the New Testament writers or original readers as less than fully self-aware, culture-processing individuals. This is not to deny that in their society the needs of the groups to which individuals belonged were not typically much more important than in our modern, Western, individualistic societies, but it is to warn against approaches which obscure the individual by excessive emphasis on the group.

With this as a basis, in ch. 3, the study proceeded with a consideration of the existence of the self-aware, and self-interested individual in the Hellenistic world. Evidence from major classical scholars' consideration of the Greek literature and tradition of Greek philosophy from Plato onwards suggests that, for at least several centuries previous to the Hellenistic period, there existed a clear understanding of the individual as a self-conscious agent, responsible for his or her own actions, clearly distinct from the natural world around and from society. The testimony of the literature, according to a number of major classical scholars, is to the self-conscious individuality of the people of ancient Greece.

Much, however, has been made of the nature of the first century Mediterranean world as a "shame culture" by some New Testament scholars, wishing to emphasis the difference between the world of the New Testament and our own, and to stress the strongly socially-embedded nature of the first century self. The result of this is to portray the first century Mediterranean personality as "dyadic", with behaviour completely determined by group norms and expectations. An examination of the claims that are made by Malina and others in this regard concluded that these are far too extreme, and that there is good reason to question the existence of a strong "shame" culture in the New Testament period, and that some social anthropologists are unhappy with the simplistic and outdated way in which this category is being used by New Testament scholars. The conclusion here is, that given the mistaken nature of the self inherent in this avenue of research, this approach is not particularly helpful in assessing the meaning of the New Testament texts.

All this is not to deny the more group-oriented nature of the New

Testament world. The next focus of the discussion was some social anthropology research which has studied the nature of individualism and collectivism in a variety of societies. This research concluded that it is safe to categorise the society with which we are concerned as much more collectively oriented than our own, yet noted the caution inherent in the research reviewed against being too rigid in our stereotyping, and the danger of denying the existence of individualistic, even strongly individualistic, behaviour in what might be generally termed a more collective society. A brief review of the Hellenistic world of the urban cities in which Paul lived and worked suggests that, while the family or religious group to which a person belonged was much more important to him or her than is often the case today, it is likely that individualism was on the increase and that self-motivated and individualistic behaviour was by no means unknown or uncommon. The overall conclusion, then, from a consideration of the classical and Hellenistic eras is that it is likely the people amongst whom the apostle Paul lived and ministered had a lively sense of self and individuality not so very different from our own, albeit tempered by a greater sense of group belonging.

In chs. 4 and 5, the evaluation of the sense of the self in Paul's world was concluded by considering the nature of religion in general, and then, in particular, Judaism. The way in which religion in ancient Greece was very much a corporate or community matter was noted, with its concern, as we might expect, in a more simple, rural setting, with the practical matter of how the community interacted with the often hostile world of nature surrounding it. As we move on into the more urban, sophisticated setting of the cities of the Hellenistic period, with a changing intellectual climate and increased opportunity for individualism, we see the development of forms of religion that reflected a more personal quest for enlightenment and salvation, moving towards the sort of personal expression we find in Gnosticism and the Hermetic writings. The success of the mystery religions, for example, which flourished during the period seems to demonstrate a considerable degree of personal piety and concern with personal salvation. In addition, the Hellenistic philosophical schools bear witness to the growth of spiritual and intellectual needs at a personal level. These philosophies typically had a concentration on the individual and his place in the cosmos, teaching self-sufficiency and giving moral and spiritual direction.

The question regarding how personal or collective a religion we

have in first century Judaism is, of course, of vital importance in this survey of the world of the apostle Paul. An examination of Judaism discussed briefly the encounter between Judaism and Hellenism and concluded that there is evidence that at least some Jewish thinking was influenced by the emerging Hellenistic spirit with its new sense of individuality. A brief review of the collective nature of Israelite religion and Judaism suggests that it would be too simplistic, as some studies have done, to characterise Jewish religion as wholly concerned with the collective. Important work by Kaminsky suggests that there are both individualist and collectivist strands in Jewish tradition, which need to be taken into account. It is unlikely either, that it is a simple matter of a progression over time from more community-based concerns towards a deeper appreciation of the importance of the individual before God; it is probably better to think of both aspects coexisting in Hebrew thinking. Without doubt, however, Jewish tradition is not overly concerned with the individual as an autonomous entity, but rather as part of a community which has been called into a special relationship with God. The overriding theme of much of the Old Testament, of course, is the covenant, which primarily is focused on the nation. The individual is important in Hebrew thinking, but largely as part of the larger group.

The growth of personal piety within Judaism in the post-exilic period, however, was noted, with an increased sense of the afterlife and concentration on prayer and study of the scriptures. All this suggests an increased degree of internalisation and individualisation of the Jewish Law in the lives of ordinary Jewish people in the period with which we are concerned. This, nevertheless, was all experienced within the context of a strong sense of community and of the importance of the nation, or at least the Jewish sect to which one belonged. Personal salvation was still very much in the context of God's salvific plans for the community.

The picture of the Judaism which was the basis of Paul's own worldview, then, is one where the relationship of the community to God, and its future in God's plans, was of the utmost importance, but where the importance of the individual before God was by no means trivial. The Hebrew scriptures and Jewish literature and practice in the post-exilic period bear witness to the importance of personal devotion and matters of individual concern in Jewish thinking. There was nothing in Paul's own ethnic tradition which would have precluded him having a lively concern with matters of personal salvation.

Part II: Selected Texts in Romans 1–8—The Emphasis on the Individual in Pauline Thought

The second part of this study examined selected texts in Romans to see if it is possible to identify a concern by Paul for the implications of his gospel to the individual. Prior to the textual analysis per se, there was a review of recent approaches to the interpretation of Romans, which highlights the focus that there has been in recent years by scholars on more corporate issues. In particular, the shifting of the interpretation of Romans away from individual matters of conscience, guilt, and individual salvation towards the more collectively-oriented question of who are the people who participate in God's purposes, was noted. Recent scholarship on Romans has, rightly, been concerned to understand the letter with the socio-historical background of both its author and original readership in mind, and the trend has been away from previous understandings of Romans as a theological treatise concerned with individual salvation. Thus Paul's own circumstances—his forthcoming visit to Jerusalem, and his proposed Spanish mission—and the social situation of the Roman church—probably a mixed congregation, with growing Gentile-Jewish tensions due to a Gentile group which had become more dominant and tempted to feelings of superiority over the Jewish minority—suggest to many scholars that what Paul has to say in Romans is all about how Jews and Gentiles participate together in the people of God, couched in a way that is particularly appropriate to the Roman situation. A number of recent interpretations of Romans were considered, all drawing quite different conclusions about how exactly the letter is to be interpreted, but all sharing a similar view that Paul's main focus is on group-related issues, rather than individual soteriology. In a variety of different ways, then, Romans is seen to be an explanation of how through Christ God's purposes are developing in such a way as to encompass both Jews and Gentiles.

The relevance of Part I of this study to Romans, however, was raised, where it was noted that selfhood and individuality were just as important human characteristics in Paul's world as now, and that it is unlikely that there was anything in Paul's Jewish background that would have precluded him having a concern for the individual self in his understanding of matters pertaining to salvation. The suggestion at this stage in the study was that it is possible that the question of how people groups fit into God's purposes is not the sum

total of Paul's concern in his letter, and that although Romans obviously addresses the broad issue of Jew and Gentile within God's purposes that was such a live issue in Paul's day, it, importantly, also addresses fundamental issues about the human condition and personal salvation. The suggestion was that, given all the factors considered to date, it is possible that we might find in Paul is a more balanced theology of individual and the community, where there is a concern for an individual's relationship with God within an overarching community narrative and view of the purpose of God which primarily concerned the people of God.

The first text to be considered was Romans 1:16, 17. The verses are considered by many commentators to sum up succinctly the overall thrust of Paul's argument in Romans, and many earlier commentators saw in them pointers to the issue of the relationship between an individual and God. The phrase δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, in v. 17 which is so fundamental to Paul's exposition of his gospel was considered and the more relational and social meaning that has been highlighted in both Old Testament and New Testament research discussed. Such an understanding of righteousness and the related term justification has prompted new interpretations of Paul that tend to be more collective in their focus. Thus the broad thrust of Paul's concerns in Romans is not primarily anthropological with a corresponding focus on individual soteriology, but is more to do with how God's purposes in the world are outworked and with the question of the group which will participate in those purposes. Thus many scholars have recently concluded that Paul is chiefly concerned with the question of the faithfulness of the covenant God of Israel, and how that has been demonstrated through Christ. His concern is with the in-breaking of that covenant God into the world's history and the sovereign claim he has on all the world's peoples, Jew and Gentile alike. The prevailing tendency, then, is for scholars to emphasise the corporate concerns within Paul's gospel. Too often however, this has been done to the neglect of a recognition of the relevance of this gospel to the individual.

This was demonstrated by reference to a number of recent considerations of these verses, where scholars have emphasised that the real focus of the gospel which Paul introduces us to is the issue of the collective identity of the people of God, and the practical issue of the relationship between the Jewish and Gentiles groups in Rome, often with a denial that there is anything of implication for the individual

in what Paul is saying. A careful consideration, however, of the question of how the faithfulness of God (his righteousness) in the gospel of Christ results in salvation for those who believe, and the introduction of the Pauline emphasis on faith, directs us strongly to the personal and individual relevance of the Pauline gospel. The fact that both Jews and Gentiles participate by faith in the people of God points logically to the fact that the Pauline gospel involves individuals in personal choice. We are not only in the realm of the definition of the community of the people of God, but in that of individual decision making, and personal, inner, religious feelings and thoughts. A consideration of the quotation from Habakkuk in v. 17 noted the possible ways that this could be translated, but opted for suggesting that Paul's emphasis here is on those who are "righteous by faith". This seems to fit better the whole Pauline argument to be followed in chs. 1–4, and points us to a dual concern in Paul's understanding of the gospel. The goal of God's purposes is to create a righteous community which will experience his life; but this community is made up of individuals who have become part of that community through their own, personal faith. The strongly collective nature of Paul's outlook certainly cannot be doubted, but his emphasis on the possibilities for the individual through their individually exercised faith demonstrates for us that Paul's gospel was just as fundamentally concerned with the individual.

In ch. 8, this issue of the individual nature of faith was explored further with reference to 3:21–28. From 1:18 to ch. 3, Paul has clearly established that the need of salvation is universal, with both Jews as well as Gentiles requiring the intervention of God. In the passage discussed, Paul now wants to establish in his argument is that there is one means of access to this salvation—through faith. The Oneness of God implies that his salvation cannot be restricted to one small part of the human race—the Jews—and thus the means of salvation cannot revolve around observance of a very specifically Jewish legal code. The unifying element for all those to be included in the people of God, then, for Paul was faith in Jesus, Israel's Messiah. A brief review of the meaning of faith in Paul's own tradition in the Hebrew scriptures and in Judaism was conducted, which highlighted the sense of faith as the ideal response to God's prior calling and grace, consisting of trust and confidence in God and grateful obedience to God's requirements. Despite the way in which

faith serves to function as a distinguishing feature of Yahweh's people, and hence acts as an identifying characteristic, and the way in which some scholars thus want to think of faith as primarily a community feature, the very necessary operation of faith at the level of the individual directs our attention toward the personal aspects of faith. Faith in the Hebrew tradition was often an intensely personal experience on the part of the individual needing deliverance by God and the evidence of the Psalms, and the way in which individuals play their rôle in the overarching Old Testament story of Israel are important in this regard. It was such an idea of faith that Paul inherited and that we might expect to find when he speaks of the rôle of faith in the new community of Jesus Christ.

Paul's argument to date in Romans, which has concentrated on universal sinfulness, of necessity puts the spotlight on the individual. It is surely right to recognise the covenantal background to Paul's theology in Romans, which permeates his whole argument, with its focus on the covenant community, but because Paul essentially creates a level playing field of both Jews and Gentiles with both groups condemned as sinners, individual salvation begins to take on major importance. Once Paul removes ethnic considerations and makes a common response of faith the criteria for covenant status, then the spotlight falls very clearly on an individual's personal response to what God has done in Christ. The individual can thus be seen to move centre stage in Paul's thinking, due to the universal nature of his gospel.

In v. 22, the phrase πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ was considered to be best translated as "the faith(fulness) of Jesus Christ", and the idea discussed that what Paul is arguing here is that God's salvific action is appropriated by those who exercise faith in the faithfulness of Christ. Alongside Christ, the only one who proved capable of the requirement of complete faithfulness to God, everyone else must be considered a sinner. What is needed, then, is for those not capable of this level of faithfulness to participate in Christ's faithfulness through their trust and commitment to Christ. Paul thus utilises the full meaning of his Jewish tradition of the meaning of faith—trust in the saving power of God, commitment to him, and faithfulness to his requirements. This last sense of the idea of "faith" for Paul has been, importantly, met by Christ and the believer benefits from what Christ has done. (It was noted, of course, that Paul does not lose this sense

of faith as faithfulness for the believer entirely, simply that faithfulness now need not be expressed as faithfulness to the ethnic requirements of the Jewish Law.)

The logic of Paul's argument thus highlights the importance of individual soteriology. Everyone needs salvation, anyone can become part of the new community, and therefore the imperative is that each individual should respond in faith to Christ. The need for faith shows us clearly that participating in the people of God is dependent upon some personal decisions of the believer—belief in the gospel message about God's action in Christ, adherence to the new community of faith, and the adoption of certain modes of behaviour, for example—and upon certain inner, personal attitudes, which include a new belief system, and trust and confidence in Christ's action on the believer's behalf. With such cognitive and emotional elements inherent in faith, it cannot simply be described with respect to its social function.

A number of writers have, however, sought to do just this, including Watson and Bossman, but their sociological interpretation of what Paul means by faith surely reduces it too much. The conclusion of this study, as a result of carefully plotting the Pauline argument up to and including 3:21–26, and discussing the meaning of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, is that the personal implications of Paul's talk about faith should not be minimised. In Paul's view, grounded in his Hebrew tradition, the sense of faith as faithfulness to the Law's requirements was something that Paul saw having been achieved by Christ. The other sense of faith as trust in Israel's God, however, which was now directed towards Christ and his faithful death was that which enabled participation in the covenant community. Such a meaning of faith clearly involves mental, cognitive and emotional activities, all of which operate on a personal, individual level. This is indicative for us that Paul's gospel at a most fundamental level concerns the individual, offering personal salvation to individual selves in need.

The final text examined was Romans 7:7–25. This passage at first glance clearly seems to be a discussion by Paul of the relevance to the individual of all his previous talk about righteousness, universal sin and salvation and justification. The use of the personal pronoun and the talk of the self's struggle with sin indicated to many previous exegetes that Paul is here primarily concerned with the struggle of the individual, either before or after becoming a Christian. Recently,

however, a number of writers have found more in the text to do with the community and social identity and have questioned the relevance of the text to a personal, inner struggle with sin. A number of approaches to the text were discussed which offer primarily group-oriented explanations of the struggle depicted in the chapter, all largely agreeing with Stowers, though in different ways, that what we have in ch. 7 is assuredly not an "analysis of the human predicament to which Christ was the solution".[1] Rather, ch. 7 is presented variously as a discussion of how the law no longer acts as a sociological symbol legitimated by God and no longer offers social cohesion to the emerging Christian group; as Paul's attempt to discredit the law so as to push the Jewish group at Rome closer to the Gentile Christians; as a rejection by Paul of group exclusivism and religious covetousness; or as Paul discounting the law as the means of Gentile inclusion in the people of God. All of these interpretations want to focus on Jewish-Gentile relations, rather than on the implications for the individual of Paul's gospel.

Those writers with a strong covenantal interpretation of Pauline thought in Romans, like Wright and many others, want to assert that it is important that we see the individual of ch. 7 firmly within the context of wider community, and that what we have here is a discussion by Paul of the story of Israel's disobedience and sin, which continues to the present time. This is accompanied by an explanation by Paul of the rôle of the Law in all this—which is that, although it is divine and not to be identified with sin, it is nevertheless incapable of bringing life and freedom from sin to God's people. The chapter thus leads up to ch. 8 where Paul shows that the answer to the disobedience of Israel and the powerlessness of the law is what God has done in Christ. The focus of attention for these scholars, then, is salvation history and the people of God, as opposed to a Pauline concern with how an individual contends with the power of sin in his or her life.

The interpretation of this study, however, takes seriously the overtly personal tone of the passage and the heavy use by Paul of the first person. Paul's purpose in ch. 7 is to demonstrate the inability of the Jewish law to enable a person to please God. Prior to ch. 5, as Paul has outlined his understanding of the gospel, he has been concerned

[1] S.K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 258.

to show that both Jew and Gentile alike can share in the people of God in Christ, with the Jewish law no longer having any place in defining this people—this is now done by faith in Christ. From ch. 5 onwards, as Paul proceeds to discuss the freedom that the people of God experience from sin and death in their lives, he must now deal with the question of whether the law is of any necessity in overcoming sin and living in a way that is pleasing to God. A related question that arises in the course of this argument is, if the law is of no value in this fight against sin, can the law, itself be said to be sin?

Paul makes his argument that the law has no such value compelling by the use of the first person, making what he has to say immediately relevant to both himself and his Roman readers. The "I" in the passage, then, is both autobiographical and representative, but retains a very personal and individual sense. Other commentators who want to retain the autobiographical sense of what Paul is saying find that the change of tense in v. 14 from the past to the present forces them to argue that the dire struggle of the self with sin in vv. 14–25 depicts an on-going struggle by the Christian, caught in a proposed old-Age/new-Age tension, where the full victory of Christ is not yet fully manifest. This, as was noted, presents the problem of a seemingly different reality for the Christian than the sense of victory we get in chs. 6 and 8.

This study argues that an autobiographical sense of Paul's argument can be held on to, and the conflict between ch. 7 and chs. 6 and 8 resolved, if vv. 14–25 are interpreted as referring to both a pre-Christian reality for Paul and his readers and a present danger. The struggle depicted in these verses is one which Paul and both groups in Rome have experienced prior to becoming Christians. Paul and the Jewish group clearly sought to live "under the law", but the same can be said for the Gentile group, which was likely to have come to Christ from a background of synagogue "God-fearing". The danger that Paul recognises is that, in the context of the question of observance of the Law still being the matter of some dispute in the church generally, Roman Christians might be tempted to revert to law observance. Paul's view, clearly stated in ch. 7, is that the law is of no value for power for Christian living, and he uses the present tense in vv. 14–25 to highlight the ever-present danger of slipping back to reliance on the law rather than the spirit of Christ. It is only in the Spirit that a life of victory over sin can be achieved, as Paul shows in ch. 8.

The sense of the "I" here, then, can be said to depict the Jewish struggle with the law, but not in the way that this is maintained by those scholars who want to see a history of salvation in the passage. Typically for these scholars the situation after v. 14 cannot refer to the situation of the Christian, so the present tense must be accommodated by making the passage refer to the present ongoing situation of Israel. This in any case makes the whole passage vv. 7–25 an integrated whole, as they view vv. 7–13, with the difficult period noted by Paul when the "I" was "apart from the law", as referring to the period of time for Israel prior to the giving of the law at Sinai. This study, however, does not view the "I" as being so remote from Paul and his readers as this. The whole passage has a much more personal ring to it, and the interpretation put forward deals better with the difficulties of the text that have been noted by many. Put briefly, the contention of this study is that the "I" refers to Paul and the two groups at Rome, both Jewish and Gentiles who came from a synagogue background, and that Paul in vv. 7–13 describes the advent of the full implications of the law upon his inner life as a young man, and the conflict into which it plunged him, and then in vv. 14–25 describes more fully the conflict in which he was engaged prior to Christ, and into which he would again be plunged, were he to begin law observance again.

This reading of the passage once again highlights the way in which Paul's argument in Romans has an important relevance for the individual. Paul's way of dealing with the question of the value of the law in the life of the believer is to proceed by reference to the personal experience of both himself and his readers. His focus is on the difficulty that any one individual person has in seeking to live by the law, discussing the very individual and personal struggle that each person without the power of Christ has in order to do what is right and good, in a natural state of fleshly weakness, and with only the guidance of the written commandment. We have, then, in ch. 7 Paul primarily concerned with the inner conflict of the individual with sin. His purpose is to show the Roman Christians the inability of the law to help in this struggle and to warn them of the dangers of any of them slipping back. Only in the Spirit of Christ is there victory for the Christian.

More collective ways of interpreting the text, I believe, only serve to obscure the argument that Paul progresses here about the inability of anything other than Christ to give a person life. Again we see

that Paul's argument working primarily at the level of the individual, and that Paul once again has the individual and personal aspects of salvation clearly in his mind.

Conclusion

This study has sought to demonstrate, then, that Paul's letter to the Romans must be read against the background of a first century Hellenistic world, where the self-consciousness of the individual was a defining element of human life, where self-interested and motivated, behaviour was clearly evident and where an individual was an active, culture-processing person, whose behaviour was not wholly determined by the society in which she or he lived. This is to be balanced by the recognition that the individual of Paul's world did live in a society where the needs and demands of the community were much more important than in our modern world. In this sense, it could be said to be a much more collective society.

Yet it seems it is the recognition of the more collective nature of this world that has taken on the greater importance for New Testament scholars, and Pauline scholars in particular, over the past few years. Armed with research techniques and studies from the social sciences, and with the social science presumption that it is the collective, rather than the individual, which is the determining factor in behaviour, New Testament scholars have sought to gain new insights into the meaning of the texts.

The results of this have been mixed. Where there have been attempts to recover the socio-historic circumstances of the New Testament authors and their original readers and credence has been given to these in the textual interpretation, there has been much of value; where there has been a focus on the collective to the denial of self-conscious individuality, there has been a diminution in the understanding of the intended original meaning of the texts.[2]

It is the contention of this study, then, that the recognition of the individuality of the first century Mediterranean person will prompt

[2] Clearly there are New Testament studies that have used social scientific methods that have avoided such extremes. A good example is P. Esler's commentary on Galatians, which relies on social identity theory, but which set out not to be reductionist or "to explain the theological in terms of the social" only, but "holistically to do justice to both aspects of the work's complex meaning". P. Esler, *Galatians*, 40.

us to see a concern for how the gospel affects the individual as we read Paul, for it becomes unthinkable that this would not have been important to such a man. The study indicates firstly that there was nothing in Paul's Jewish tradition that would have directed his attention away from the individual. Secondly it is likely that, in the Hellenistic, urban world in which Paul ministered to Gentiles, he clearly saw how the gospel with which he had been entrusted—a cosmic, universal, message that sprang out of the covenant that God had with the nation of Israel and yet which reached out beyond this to create a new people through which God's eternal purposes could be worked—appealed and applied at a fundamental level to the individual.

The three texts examined in Romans which highlighted the way in which Paul thought about salvation, faith and the struggle with sin, all confirm that this is the case. Paul's theology doubtless sprang out of his Jewish covenantal tradition, he was a broad thinker who was concerned with the universal and cosmic implications of the gospel, and he was deeply concerned about the issue of the relationship between groups of Jewish and Gentile believers in the church. Furthermore, it would be wrong to reduce the broad scope of his thought, his "macro-level" thinking, to the question of how the gospel affects the individual. Yet the effect of the gospel on the individual was a matter of importance for Paul; indeed it was an integral part of his thinking and we divorce it from the rest of the grandeur of his thought and the bigger issues with which he deals, at our peril.

The indications from this study, then, are that Paul saw clearly that God's purposes were worked out, fundamentally, with individual selves; individuals from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds, who were equally excluded from the people of God because of sin and disobedience and who needed to appropriate the salvation available through God's action in Christ through faith. There can be no question that Paul was a radical individualist or that his understanding of salvation was concentrated on the individual in such a way that the people of God within the purposes of God became of secondary importance. Yet to recognise the importance of the individual within the community in Paul's thinking should not be to deny that he understood that the gospel had full and vital implications for the individual.

It is important therefore as we approach the study of the Pauline texts to be able to integrate approaches that recognise the covenantal background to Pauline theology and so are concerned with doing

justice to Paul's interest in the overarching purposes of God and the participation of Jews and Gentiles together in God's people, and those that recognise in Paul an understanding of how the action of God in Christ is of vital importance for the life of any one individual. The integration of covenant theology and soteriology is something that needs to find its place centre stage in Pauline studies, and indeed in New Testament study generally.

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BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION SERIES

Editors
R. ALAN CULPEPPER · ROLF RENDTORFF
Associate Editor
DAVID E. ORTON

Volume 57

The proposal is that there was a lively sense of the individual self in persons in the Hellenistic world of the urban centres in which Paul lived and ministered, whereby individualistic behaviour was not unknown and where individuals were not simply determined by their culture and the group of which they were a part. This is in contrast to many recent sociological approaches to the New Testament which emphasise the collective over the individual. On the basis of this, it is argued that the sense of the importance of the individual is a feature of Paul's letter to the Romans. Three texts in the first eight chapters of Romans are examined to indicate Paul's concern with the salvation of the individual, and not just with questions of a more collective nature to do with the identity of the people of God.

Dr. Gary W. Burnett obtained his degrees in Divinity and Sciences from London University and Queen's University, where he later earned his Ph. D. Dr. Burnett combines a career in business with teaching and researching in Union Theological College and Belfast Bible College, both part of Queen's University Belfast. He has previously published papers in the *Irish Biblical Studies*.

ISSN 0928-0731
ISBN 90 04 12297 4